

**The Book  
of  
Balder Rising**



**Robert Blumetti**

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*A Modern Perspective on the Norse Religion*

*Robert Blumetti*

iUniverse, Inc.  
New York Lincoln Shanghai

# **The Book of Balder Rising**

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*This book is dedicated to **Robert Zoller**,  
who led me over the Rainbow Bridge.*

*“When justice is crushed,  
when evil is triumphant,  
then I come back.  
For the protection of the good,  
for the destruction of  
evil-doers, for the establishment  
of the reign of Righteousness,  
I am born again and again,  
age after age.”*

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# FOREWORD

By  
*Ralph Berger*

This book has been twenty years in the making. Actually, it is more correct to describe this book as having “grown.” *The Book of Balder Rising* is not a “bible” in the usual sense, because this concept is alien to our Folk Faith. The true religion of our people has always been a living religion that grows with us as a people. Blumetti does not pretend to be some kind of “prophet.” What he has attempt to do is to put on paper the inspired revelations that were conveyed to him through twenty years of meditation on the Gods through the use of the Runes. It is not meant to be some kind of “holy writ” that such Middle Eastern cults like Judaism, Christianity and Islam depend on.

What must be understood upon reading this book is that each member of the Folk is a potential conduit by which the Gods will use to convey their knowledge to our people. Long ago Blumetti swore that he would devote his life to the Gods, and their resurrection. This book is the fulfillment of that promise. He has written what he has learned and hopes it will help you, the reader, as an individual and collective as a member of the Folk, to survive the radical changes that is taking place and will accelerate in the century to come. The years and decades that lie ahead promise to be turbulent and we will witness a great disintegration of all that we know and have become accustomed to. Many of our kinsmen will undoubtedly be seduced by the call of strange and alien Gods. This is why our Gods have sought to act and present to us a path, by which we might save ourselves and our kinsmen, and lead them back to the Gods of our ancestors.

Blumetti was first called to the Gods when he joined a Norse study group in 1982. The group was organized and run by Bob Zoller, a Gothi with Rune-Gild. For six years the group met every other Friday on a regular basis, in New York City. It contained about five to nine people of various backgrounds. The group began by studying the Norse myths and practicing simple breathing exercises and rune meditation. The group was dedicated to Freyja, the Goddess of love and joy.

In time the group's progression developed its practices of breathing, meditation and rune chanting. The group introduced both *galdor* and seither magic practices. Group rune-chanting and dancing was often practiced. Eventually the group became very adept in rune lore, and both forms of magic. Over the years the group felt confident enough to try and evoke the Gods. Several of its members were able to induce a shamanistic trance-state. Blumetti was especially adept at this and was able to travel to other worlds while in such a trance state. While in such a state, Blumetti experienced several moving, and soul transforming incidents.

On one occasion Blumetti found himself on a golden ship, sailing through black waters, under an equally black sky. He could see golden icebergs shining in the dark waters. Then, Freyja appeared before him. She promised him that if he would dedicate his life to the Gods, she would chose him to join her in her hall, Sessrumnir in the Folkvang. Blumetti was moved by the experience and swore to himself that he would dedicate himself to the Gods, just as Freyja asked. Shortly after this incident, on another occasion, Blumetti experienced his second incident while in a shamanistic trance-state. He found himself before Odin, the All-Father. The face of Odin was grim but not frightening. A voiced asked Blumetti if he agreed to Freyja's promise, and when Blumetti answered that he did, Odin impaled him upon his great spear. Blumetti could see runes inscribed on it. This was a soul-transforming initiation ordeal that changed Blumetti's life.

The third incident happened one night when the God Balder appeared before Blumetti in his bedroom. Blumetti was waken from his sleep and found Balder standing at the foot of his bead. The figure of Balder seemed translucent, as if a light shined from within, but the light did not fill the room. Balder spoke to Blumetti. "Dagaz, Nauthiz, Ansuz; these are the words that my father spoke into my ear while I laid on my funeral pyre. Their meaning is the secret of the rebirth of our people and the Gods, and through me, the Gods will live again and our people will rise from the ashes after Ragnarok."

For many years, Blumetti did not understand the meaning of what Balder said, but in time, after many years of meditation, he finally understood. He used the Runes to help him understand what the Gods were trying to make him understand. After many years, it suddenly came to him. He had discovered a new understanding of the old myths. Upon rereading them, his mind was flooded with a cascade of visions. He swore that he would try and put into words the truths he believes that the Gods had conveyed to him. And that is what he has tried to do. *The Book of Balder Rising* is a compilation of a new understanding of the Folk Faith of our people for the Twenty-first Century. It is meant to be a gift

for our Folk as we embark on our journey into both a new century and a new millennium. What Blumetti has learned during his many years of mediation on the runes and the Norse myths, he has written down in this book so that others may know and understand. Whether you believe his story or not, whether you believe what is written in these pages, the choice is yours. Either way, may you always walk with the Gods. Hail Freyja! Hail Odin! Hail Balder!

# 1

## *THE FOLK FAITH*

### **I: THE FOLK FAITH;; A NEW BEGINNING:**

The world as we know it is coming to an end. Western civilization is dying and a new dark age is looming on the horizon. The approaching storm will soon be upon us. The question we must ask ourselves is—will we, the European Folk, as a people, survive the coming new dark ages?

The answer is a joyous YES!

The secret of our survival is in the faith of our Folk—THE FOLK FAITH. This faith springs from the collective soul of our people. It has always been with us, though it has taken different and sometimes unusual forms that have appeared totally unrecognizable. This has been especially true during the last fifteen hundred years when Christianity dominated our folk. But the Folk Faith never truly died out during the centuries of Christianity. The old Gods took new forms and lived on, in a weakened state, waiting for their resurrection. And that resurrection is coming.

The Folk Faith is a living and growing religion that flows from our very essence. It is the life-force that pulses within us, and is the same life-force of the Gods. It sprang from deep within us, from our blood, our flesh and our genes. For the Gods dwell within us. They are asleep within our very cells, waiting to rise again.

The Gods are alive and they are mighty. They are not just unintelligible nature forces.

We live in Middle Earth or Midgard. Middle Earth is located at the heart of the World-Tree. Middle Earth is encircled by the eight other realms that make up the nine realms of the cosmos.

The life and death of all humans are shaped and wrought by the three Norns who sit at the Well of the Wyrd, at the roots of the World-Tree.

It is our duty to be true and honorable and remain pure in body and soul, and maintain and strengthen the bonds between us and the Gods. We must strive in all our deeds and thoughts, in all our actions and endeavors to be worthy of our Gods.

*REMEMBER! THE GODS DWELL WITHIN US!*

## **II: A NEW BEGINNING:**

The Folk faith is not just an attempt to appeal to ancestral nostalgia. The Folk Faith does not seek to resurrect a bygone era. We recognize the cycle of life. The death of the old is permanent and rebirth only occurs in new manifestations. The old religions, whether Norse, Baltic, Slavic, Roman, Greek or Celtic, are gone. They were spawn from our ancestors' collective souls in communion with the world as it was in the past. That era is gone forever, but the racial soul that binds us to them lives on. When our ancestors separated and spread out from their ancestral homeland to populate Europe, the Mediterranean and Central Asia, their faith underwent a transformation. Their collective soul interpreted their Gods in new and varying ways depending on the environments they came to colonize. But the Gods still spoke to them.

Christianity invaded and conquered our ancestors, but it could not truly kill the soul of our folk. The collective soul of our people was greater than the spirit of the alien cult that invaded the West. For Christianity to succeed, it had to adapt and adjust itself to conform to the force of the racial soul of European man. Christianity underwent a transformation from and an alien creed to one that incorporated the spirituality of the old pagan faiths of Europe into it, thus becoming a quasi-pagan religion. The Gods of old still speak to us, though they took on new forms. The Trinity of Christianity is a pagan idea which we find among the Norse, the Romans, and the Greeks. It is the unity of the male, female and the offspring from the two—The Father (male), the Son (offspring), and the Holy Spirit (the female). This process of the paganization of Christianity is especially true of Catholicism, with its many saints, pagan-like rituals, and the adoption of the forms and titles of the old pagan Roman faith, into the structure of the Catholic Church. The term, Pontifex Maximus, which is the title for the Pope, was once the name of the head of the old pagan Roman religion. This is why Protestants often refer to Catholicism as deviating from the Bible. Protestants sought to return to the Old Testament, which is Semitic and less pagan than the New Testament. The Protestant Reformation has resulted in the decay of the European soul because of its reliance more heavily on the Semitic Old Tes-

tament. Today all Christianity has become infected with this re-Semiticization. This is why our people, throughout the world, and especially in Europe, are in an advanced state of decay. Modern Christianity and Western Civilization, which was built upon it, has turned away from the essence of our collective soul.

With the rise of a new globalist Christianity, the Gods of our ancestors have been abandoned. Our people have degenerated into a state of blind ignorance (Hodur). An evil spirituality has taken hold of our people (Loki). We are aimless, rootless and without a purpose. We lack a vision or belief in the future. This state of decline and descent towards eventual ethnocide, is Ragnarok.

### **III: THE REBIRTH OF THE GODS:**

The Gods are waiting to be called back from the netherworld where they have dwelled ever since Ragnarok. Odin put in place the means for their resurrection. He sacrificed his most beloved son for the purpose of ensuring their return. And we, in the Folk Faith have discovered the instrument of their resurrection.

Our people suffer the blind ignorance of Hodur. Guilt, hypocrisy and alienation rule because we are blinded from the true religion of the timeless ways of our Folk. The Folk Faith is not about reviving a dead religion. The faiths of our ancestors never died out but metamorphosed into Christianity. This took place as the new Christian faith, in its attempt to exterminate the old faiths, instead, incorporated the old faiths into it. Old beliefs, old ways and even the old Gods were absorbed, and given new forms, but their essence lived on because they reside in our blood. Our blood is the link between us and our Gods, and so long as our blood remains true and unmixed, the Gods lived. Even when an alien creed came to dominate our people, the Gods still lived, though in a hibernated state. They still influenced our ancestors, and slowly they transformed the Christian creed into a semi-pagan creed.

But eventually, even this semi-pagan Christianity has been compromised. Our people now live under a truly alien dogma. We have fallen under the creed of internationalism, multiculturalism and globalism. We have fallen under the blind ignorance of Hodur. It is time for the Gods to be reborn. The vehicle to achieve this end is Balder. He is the link between us and the Gods. Our blood, or genes are the means, by which the Gods will return to us. What we mean when we say the blood, is the genetic code—our DNA. The Gods reside in each and every one of us. They exist in each of the billions of cells that make us who and what we are. They live within our genes, our DNA strands, within our chromosomes.

The Gods are timeless and manifest themselves in multiple religious paths; Germanic, Roman, Celtic, Greek, Baltic, Slavic or other Europeans. This division resulted from the dispersion of our ancestors into diverse environments, creating different languages, and formed distinct cultures and societies from their close communion with the diverse environments they lived in. This division caused multiple perceptions of our Gods. They might have referred to them by different names, but they were still the same Gods. But truly, they all worshiped the same Gods, as their common ancestors did thousands of years before them, before they left their original homeland. In our new age, all our people have come together once more to form one civilization, one race, and one people. As a single people, we can once again worship the true Gods of our most ancient ancestors.

Balder's return is coming. We are not speaking of the return of some messiah, but of natural growth, like the leaves that grow each year on the branches of the trees, or the grass that rises out of the earth. We are speaking of the resurrection of the life-force of the Gods, which is personified in the God Balder. Balder's return is both spiritual and physical—the spiritual and physical rebirth of our folk.

## **IV: A LIVING FAITH:**

We can see evidence of his return, in a rebirth of interest in the old faith. So many of our people seek to resurrect the old Norse religion, as well as other faiths of our people, the Celts, the Romans and the Greeks. But, it is impossible to recreate that which is dead. Like all life, it dies, but eventually it is reborn. When life is reborn, it is done in a new form, though its roots are planted in that which came before it. It is like the Yggdrasill, with its roots in the past and its branches rising into the future. So it is with the Folk Faith of our people. It is growing anew, but will never take the exact form that it once possessed.

What you read in these pages is not dogma, but a starting point and an illumination. It is the starting point where we begin to build a new world, a brighter and better future on the ruins of the past. There are many paths to Balder. There are many roads leading to Gimli. We have no infallible holy book, and what is contained within is a description of the unfolding of the Folk Faith of our people.

The Folk Faith is not just an attempt to resurrect the old Norse religion, but a call to a new faith for our people. It is the vehicle for the rebirth of the most ancient faith of our most ancient European ancestors, and thus, the completion the circle of life.

The Folk Faith springs naturally from the soul of our Folk. It is born of the blood, or genes, where the Gods reside. It is this fountain of Godly inspiration that links us with nature and with our kinsmen throughout the world. So long as our people stir clear of Loki's lies, any alien religion or set of beliefs that our people many adopt will be transformed by our collective mythos or soul, which is the will of the Gods within us. Thus, when Christianity invaded pagan Europe and suppressed the old faiths among the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans and Slavs, the will of the Gods prevailed and eventually transformed Christianity from a universalist, Middle Eastern Creed into a Euro-Aryan set of beliefs that conformed to our innate mythos. But today, the lies of Loki have corrupted the soul of our people, just as Loki corrupted the Gods and brought about their destruction, Loki's lies are leading us to our Ragnarok. Our Folk has lost the spiritual link with our ancestral Gods, and have been led astray. We have become a rootless and directionless, collection of individuals who lead aimless lives of debauchery and self-destruction. We are being led blindly into the flames of Muspellheim by the treacherous Loki.

Even in these times of endless winters of soulless existence, there are those among our people who once again hear the voice of the Gods. The Folk Faith is a religion that has evolved gradually over many generations in the past, and it will rise again in the same manner as we march into the future. It is a community comprising of the union of both Gods and mortals. The Gods of our ancestors never died. They still dwell within us, waiting only for the proper conditions for their return and spring back in full force. But it is up to us to consciously work to break the restraints of an alien cult that strangles us.

We must study the old tales and learn as much about the old ways as possible, but we must not fall into the trap of trying to recreate the past. It is all good and fun to "play" Viking, but if we are to ensure the rebirth of the Gods, through Balder, then we must take seriously our endeavor bring the Gods back. We must not fall into the trap of trying to recreate an era that is now gone. We are marching into the Twenty-first century. If the Folk Faith is to be a living religion, we must adopt what has been passed on to us and build on it. A living religion grows with time and so to will our Folk Faith. It will grow and change, and it will change us. We will grow and be transformed together as will learn to live with the Gods. This does not mean we shouldn't have fun doing it. In fact, I especially emphasis the necessity to enjoy ourselves. Our new tribes must be built upon love, joy and happiness. Hatred has no place in the new tribes.



## V: NEW TRIBES ARE BORN:

As we continue to celebrate and honor the Gods, through individually and collectively, the Gods draw strength from us. They draw energy from our activities and this helps to give them form in our plane of existence. As they grow in power, they return strength and power to us. This results in our activities gaining new members until finally, new tribes will be born. Below the surface of every person of European descent is a pagan waiting to resurface. Our Folk Faith is a call for our people throughout the world to return to their roots and succumb to the instinctive call of the song of those ancient mist-enshrouded deities that still dwell within our every cell.

As pockets of activity spread through the United States, and across the world, wherever our people celebrate and honor the Gods, new tribes will also be born. New tribes will form from these pockets of activity. They will take on the form of new communities. Our people will continue to live their lives, working and taking part in the greater society that they live within. There is no way to isolate ourselves, and we should not seek to do so. But in time, we will organize and form tribes and these tribes will acquire wealth and use it to purchase land and property. Some communities could be self-contained. It is possible to buy land and set up “communes” isolated from the rest of the world, but this will only be accomplished in those regions that are underpopulated. In most cases the new tribes will purchase land and built temples or hofs and compounds where our folk can gather to celebrate and honor the Gods. The resurrection of the Gods, the reappearance of the old ones will effect important changes among our people. As the present civilization crumbles, it will drag down Christianity, which is bankrupt. The chains that enslave our souls will break and set free the Gods once more. They will rub their eyes and rise from their long slumber to declare their domain once more.

When the Gods do return, they will sweep away the decadence of the present crass world that we flounder in, trying to eke out an existence. Their return will have the force of a spiritual earthquake of extraordinary magnitude. Everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear can see the writing on the wall. Our Western Civilization is on its last leg. It is decaying from within and it will only be a matter of time, probably before the end of the Twenty-first century, that it is swept away. The coming catastrophe that is looming just over the horizon will break the hold that Christianity has over our people. Then the old Gods will rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes. Thor will spring up with his mighty hammer in his hand, and smash the golden temples of the consumer-driven age.

Odin will ride once again inscribe the runes of wisdom upon our hearts and our souls will be filled with the joy and love of life that are Freyja's gifts. All the old Gods and Goddesses will once again reside in heaven, but first we must follow the call of Balder. Odin's son will call us to his charge, and through him we will ensure that the Gods will return to dwell among our Folk.

## VI: THE FOLK CONSCIOUSNESS:

The most intriguing nature of the old tales of the Gods is their permanence. They possess a timelessness that transcends all ages. Even when our people followed an alien creed, they survived. They have no origin and there is no one individual credited with their creation, this is because they grew out of the collective Folk Consciousness or soul of our people—the Folk. This makes the tales of the Gods timeless and anonymous. It's as if they always existed, waiting for someone to write them down. The message they convey is timeless and eternal, and the wisdom is as old and ancient as the universe itself.

Their truth is all-embracing for our people, and though the literal retelling of the tales and the memory of the actual Gods may fade, the eternal truths live on, as do the Gods, in different forms and are retold in different ways, but they remain the common property of all our people—our Folk.

Their very longevity is due to a permanence that is rooted to the inner essence of our collective Folk-soul.

Life is an endless journey of struggle and strife. The only true peace comes with death. The world is ruled by certain laws that govern our material existence. Each individual is born as a biological organism, with a certain DNA. Within this DNA lie both the blueprint for his genetic make-up and his spiritual essence. Therefore, we are governed in both body and soul by our DNA. The flesh or material composition is animated by the soul that is the essence of the Gods. This essence gives us life and animates the body or flesh.

A collection of individuals of similar DNA is linked together by the collective essence that resides in the DNA, and bound us to our Gods. It causes the Folk to express itself collectively in its distinct culture, religion, myths, folklore, heritage and traditions that form a unique culture. This is true of each racial group and their unique culture, which is the result of their distinctive DNA. This is part of Nature's plan, for each living thing on this earth to act accordingly to its unique character. Thus, our DNA identity's us in Nature's order or things.

Scientists have come to understand this nature through the study of sociobiology. Our behavior and personality are determined by genetic structure. This is

true for the individual as well as the Folk. Both will survive if they have a strong essence, which is our bond with our Gods. If this bond is healthy, then the individual and the Folk will accomplish great things, and the world will stand in awe of them.

All groups, as well as the individuals, who make up these races, have worth. But the individual's potential worth is only fully achieved when the individual is truly linked with his or her Folk. The union between the individual and the Folk is crucial to the well being of both, and gives meaning and purpose to life. The individual who seeks to forge links with their true Gods will naturally strengthen the link with his or her Folk. This will result in the growth, development and strengthening of the culture and the character of the Folk. This process will lead to the genetic improvement and upward development of the Folk, and thus result in the resurrection of Balder and the return of the Gods.

The awareness of our union with the Gods that we are truly the children of the Gods, can be described as our Folk Consciousness. This Folk Consciousness ensures that our culture and civilization will survive into the future. It binds us to our Gods, strengthens and reinforces our self-discipline, will and determinations, and galvanizes us to act, work and fight for a better life for us, and our children—now and in the future. But for our Folk to have a future, we need to keep alive the past.

The three Norns are the Past, Present and the Future. The Present is born out of the Past, but the Future can only be born out of the union of the Present and the Past. The Present is built upon the Past, which is the foundation of our existence, and the foundation in which we build a better future. This is the three-fold nature of the three Norns as the progenitors of our destiny or the Wyrð. As each of us have our own individual Wyrð, so too does our Folk have a collective Wyrð or destiny that is woven by the Norns.

The Folk Faith is this self-awareness that we are the children of the Gods, and if we are to survive as both individuals, and as a Folk, then we need to strengthen our bond with our Gods. Any race that has lost its bond with its ancestral Gods is lost. It is rootless and adrift. It has lost its past and is directionless in the present, which means it has no future and doomed to extinction.

We are living in the time of Ragnarok, when our history, religion, customs and heritage are under attack by the forces of destruction—the giant-forces of chaos and disintegration. The chaotic forces of destruction seek to grind down to a powdery dust all distinct cultures, civilizations and nations. This process is the Fire of Muspellheim. It will lay level all the wonderful distinctions of human-

kind, and in the process retard the natural instincts, spirituality, not just in our Folk, but in all folks throughout the world.

The Folk Faith is the essence of our Folk. It links the most ancient past with the infinite future. It is the bond that links us with our Gods. It forms our spirituality that gives voice to our myths and folklore. It is the drive to move forward as individuals and as a group. It is the biological determinism that shapes our destiny, and is the racial instincts that the Gods will return and herald in the Golden Age of Gimli.

## **VII: WHY ARE WE HERE?:**

The question of, why are we here? Must be answered if we are to understand our place in the universe. This is probably the most profound question that we can ask, and the answer is usually impossible for people of all other religions to understand. But for us who belong to the Folk Faith, the Asatru, the Indo-European or Norse religion, whatever one calls our religion, the answer is simple. We are born to prove ourselves worthy to join in the union with our Gods in the next world. Now I know that this simple explanation is not enough for most people, so let me explain. As you already know, we are the Children of the Gods. The Gods represent order and discipline in the cosmos. They counter the destructiveness and chaos of the dark forces personified by the giants. The struggle between the Gods (the Light) and the giants (the Darkness) are continuous and all things in the cosmos are swept up in this titanic struggle. By remaining loyal to the Gods, we reinforce our bond with them and thus aid them in their struggle to maintain order and Light and keep the forces of Darkness, chaos and destruction in line.

The Gods created us by bestowing their essence into us, thus we share the same essence with the Gods. They created us to aid them in their struggle. This is why Odin fills the ranks of the Einherjar with his children. This means we have a symbiotic relationship with the Gods. We are partners with our Gods, and do not hold a subservient position. Our Gods do not want us to speak to them on bended knees. We stand upright and speak with them. This is representative of the essential nature of our relationship with our Gods. They want us to be strong, because they draw strength from us and this is why we celebrate (or worship as some would say) the Gods. Our celebration of the Gods increases their influence in the affairs of man, and in return for our celebration, we draw strength from the Gods. The stronger they are, the stronger we are. But the reason for this shared

drawing of strength is to maintain the balance in the universe between the force of good or order (the Gods) and evil or chaos (the giants).

As the Children of the Gods we should celebrate our Gods as often as possible and increase our numbers. But quantity is in itself is not enough. Quality is just as important. By striving to become the best possible person as possible in this life we ensure the increased strength of the Gods, especially when we pass from this life into the next. Remember, one does not have to die heroically to enter Valhalla or the Folksvang—it is more important to live heroically. By living heroically, we mean that each of us should live by a code that the Gods live by—be honest and honorable in all that we do, be charitable to our fellow Folk, give honor and celebration to the Gods and in our heritage and culture, raise families and work together for the advancement of the Folk and the Folk Faith. It is a simple code, void of the concept of “sin” or “damnation.” The life you lead in this world, will echo in eternity. You have the power to create the shape and quality of the life you will lead in the hereafter by your deeds in this life. If you lived honorably and heroically you will be assured a place in glory in the next life. It is a misconception to think that only those who die heroically will be chosen by Freyja and Odin. The truth is that those who die heroically often lived heroic lives, but it is just as true that those who lived heroic lived seldom died heroically in battle. Most people who live a honorable and heroic life went on to die a peaceful death in their beds. What our ancestors referred to by dying heroically simply referred to a moment in their lives when they entered battle and wanted to make sure that if they face death, they should do it heroically. Remember—the Gods are the Life-Force, not the Death-Force. It is important to them how you live and death is a part of living, even if it comes at the end of life. Do you really believe that the Gods would refuse entrance into their halls of heroes to those who have proven themselves over a hundred times during their lives if they survived all battles because they were the most heroic and thus lived to a very old age and died in their beds? I do not think so. If this logic was true, then the most heroic and honorable never entered their ranks because they survived all battles. Even if Odin wanted only those who were the bravest and best warriors, he would not take only those who died in battle, but he would want those who survived just as much, if not more.

We have a duty to live our lives with honor. To do so serves the Gods and strengthens them. To do so makes us better persons and help to create a better community in which to live. It also helps to facilitate the return of Balder and thus the return of the Gods. A quest of trying to live an honorable life is the meaning of the Holy Grail. It is the brew that Aegir concocted in his great bowl

from the blood of Balder, which was given to the Gods to drink. It is the meaning of the saga of the Volsung and Odin's efforts to create a better race of man. The Volsung is the quest of living honorably. It is the quest to make us over, to improve our nature both biologically and spiritually. Remember, the Holy Grail legend existed long before Christianity. It was a pagan legend that was Christianized. It is the blood of Balder that is contained within the Grail. Only later did Christians transform the myth into a Christianized version that claims it contained the blood of Christ.

# 2

## *THE GODS AND GODDESSES OF THE FOLK FAITH*

### **I: OUR GODS:**

The Folk Faith recognizes the multidimensional nature of the All-Father. This multi-dimension is the subtotal of the entire pantheon of the many Gods and Goddesses our forebears worshiped. The way we worship our Gods is very different from the monotheistic Abrahamic religions. We view our Gods as our eldest kinfolk. We love and respect them and seek to strengthen our bonds with them. We do not go begging on bended knee or bow before them when we communicate with them. When we address our Gods, we stand erect and proud with arms outstretched in the shape of the Elhaz rune. The Gods recognize pride and courage, not craven slaves. We seek to bond with our Gods, and to achieve this, we must know them better, and live together with them. Our Folk Faith is actually a community in which Gods and men live together. For too long the bonds that joined us together were sundered, and now we seek to reforge those bonds. As we are descended from the Gods, we are with them in body and soul. Our life-force is the same as their life-force. Through sacrifice, ritual and celebration, both men and Gods draw strength from each other.

As the Indo-European Aryans migrated west into Europe, they joined with their brothers and sisters already inhabiting Europe. Over the centuries of gradual settlement there were sometimes conflicts and wars. This amalgamation is reflected in the many tales of wars among the Gods. All old faiths of the Indo-European Aryans speak of the joining of the Gods of war and the Gods of fertility, but in the Norse religion these tales are mostly clearly chronicled in the tale of the war between the Aesir and the Vanir. The former were Gods of war and the sky, while the latter were fertility Gods of the earth. Their differences blend with

time, as many of the Aesir acquired the powers of fruitfulness. Examples of this are Thor and Sif, while Frey and Freyja learned the arts of war. The Vanir are Gods of water and earth and the Aesir are Gods of air and fire.

The ancient Indo-European peoples were divided into a triple hierarchy; priests, warriors and producers. The first were not just priests, but judges and rulers as well. Odin and Tiw are examples of priest-class Gods, and Thor is a God of the warrior class. For the producers there were fertility Gods. All the old religions have similar hierarchies, and three seems to be a very important number in Indo-European societies. All Indo-European religions held three Gods above all else, though sometimes the Gods changed. Among the Norse, Odin, Thor and Frey or Freyja were usually held in high regard. Different Germanic tribes might have substituted one or two of the Gods, though it usually included Odin. The Greeks often singled out Zeus, Hera and Apollo and the Romans' high trinity originally was Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus and later was changed to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva. In fact, the concept of the Holy Trinity was borrowed from the pagan faiths of Europe. This fascination with a holy triad was incorporated into Christianity and even caused the first major chasm within early Christianity in the form of Arianism, which claimed the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were actually three separate entities. This is just another example of how Christianity assimilated much of the essence of the old faiths, and transformed itself from an oriental cult into the single most powerful faith in Europe for almost two thousand years. If it had not, it would never have successfully spread across Europe.

Many who follow the old faiths of our forebears have views that vary. Some see the Gods as Jungian archetypes, or personified aspects of the various aspects of either one universal and/or collective spirit. Though there is some truth in these ideas, they are not the whole picture. The Gods and Goddesses are real, sentient beings, possessing self-awareness and work their wills upon Midgard, in ways as various as the drops of water that make up the oceans of the world. They live through us and divine power from us, just as we do from them. They are not depended on us for existence, but our bond with them enhances their power, and their ability to work their wills on us. We know the Gods exist and are real, and that they existed long before we did. They are mightier and wiser than we are, and far beyond our full comprehension.

Because they are more powerful than us, we must be worthy of them, and to achieve this state we must forever strive to remain pure and honorable in all that we do. I use the word "strive" because we are mortals and not perfect. I want to make clear that I am not talking about sin. The Gods have no commandments to break. They ask only that we try and be the best person possible. There are no



score cards to determine if you have died within a state of sin. When we die, we are judged by the totality of our lies. Sometimes it is more important to simply recognize the faults within us and resolve to try and overcome them. It is that recognition and the determination to fight and work to become better than actually achieving any esoteric state of blessedness. In the cosmology of the Folk Faith, the universe is constantly being shaped, and so are we. When we die, and if we have not been chosen by either Odin or Freyja, we will spend eternity in the Netherworld. The life we live for all eternity will be determined by the life we lead in this world. That will not be decided by breaking commandments or committing sin, but whether or not we live honorable lives, and try and be true to our beliefs. This will either increase or diminish the strength of the life-force within us. Since it is that life-force that binds us to our Gods, it will determine the strength of the bonds we, as individuals, forge with our Gods. By living honorable lives, we strengthen those bonds and so, we move closer to the Gods, because the Gods live inside each of us.

The Gods gave life to our people. There are plenty of tales about Gods who mingled with mortals and produced different races. The Volsung is a tale about Odin trying to breed a race of superior warriors. Heimdall is said to create the different divisions of mankind by sleeping with different women. These tales convey to us that the Gods and their power, were involved in the creation of man and the many different races of mankind. When our most antediluvian forebears evolved into humans, the natural biological and genetic process that scientists today refer to as evolution was the handiwork of the Gods. Through science, biology, anthropology, ethnology, genetic engineering and eugenics, we can master our own destiny and work to improve our race, up-breeding it so that we will be closer to the Gods. Through science we can strengthen the bond between us and the Gods just as we can by applying meditation and celebration. This will eventually facilitate the return of the Gods, strengthen the bonds between us and our Gods, and herald in the golden age of Gimli that is destined to come about with the return of Balder. Thus, the way to worship the Gods is not through a slave-like, groveling on our knees, but by honoring them for whom and what they are to us, our parents. Their spirit gave us our mind, our inspiration, our instincts and our drive for advancement. The life-force of the Gods is our life-force and is the foundation of our culture and civilization. By strengthening our bonds with our Gods, through science and religion, we will be able to build a new and better civilization in the future.

Many mistake the Gods as mere personifications of the forces of nature. Others consider the old religions of our ancestors to be just nature religions. The

Gods and our Folk Faith are much more. The Gods' powers affect the environment of the world and universe we live in. Thor's name literally means thunder, Odin rides his steed, Sleipner, on the wild winds, Sif's hairs are the golden fields, Frey and Balder are Gods of the sun and Ullr's arrows are associated with the Northern Lights. Their spirit is in every aspect of the natural world, shaping it and should be received and loved by our Folk, because we are products of the same God-driven nature. Our Folk Faith is a religion that respects and loves nature and seeks to live in harmony with it, but not subservient to it, any more than we should exploit it to the point of destroying it. Living in harmony with nature is living in harmony with the Gods. We are linked to the natural world, because the same life-force of the Gods also gives us life. As we are bound to the Gods, so to are we bound to nature.

*IT IS BETTER TO LIVE IN IGNORANCE THAN NOT TO USE THE KNOWLEDGE THE GODS BESTOW UPON US. DO NOT SEEK OUT THE GODS UNLESS YOU INTEND TO LEARN FROM WHAT THEY TEACH YOU.*

The link with nature and the Gods run through us, and all the way back through our bloodline to the beginning of time. To love our Gods is to love and respect our ancestors and the precious gifts they passed down to us—our blood, our heritage, and our uniqueness. The Gods dwell within our blood, our genes, our DNA.

The Gods can appear to us in many shapes and forms. The forms and shapes the Gods take often depend on the need, and how we call to them. All of them can take different form, and there are many tales of shape-shifting. They can appear as young and old, and even in non-traditional forms. They have even appeared to us in Christian forms. For the last fifteen hundred years there have been many incidents where people claim that the Virgin Mother, Mary appears to them in different locations in Europe. The interesting thing that no one mentions is that our people have been reporting the appearance of Earth-Spirits for thousands of years before Christianity came to Europe. They were considered the Goddess of the earth, or a river or some other natural environment. But since the advent of Christianity, our people see these nature Goddesses in the shape colored by the Christian faith that they were brought up in. Even today, many of us might visualize the Gods in dreams and in meditative states as angelic or saintlike because of our Christian upbringing. We might consciously decide that we no longer believe in Christianity, but the aspects of the religion linger on within our

subconscious and it will color our perception. It is difficult to stop looking at the universe through the Christian stained-glass window.

Whether we see a God or Goddess as a young or old person, or in a traditional form or through Christian eyes, the true nature of the deity has not changed. Rather, their forms are and have always been simple and whole, but we see them through our own perceptions, perceptions that have been formed by our individual and collective experience, and cultural orientations.

## II: CELEBRATING THE GODS:

It is not uncommon to find individuals establishing a personal relationship with one particular God or Goddess. This was common in ancient times, and individuals often claimed descent from one or more Gods. Julius Caesar claimed descent from both Mars and Venus. Sometimes whole tribes claimed descent from a God or Goddess, or gave special reverence to a particular God or Goddess, such as Athens in Greece. Many Germanic tribes felt a close affinity to Thor, or Frey or Balder.

In modern times many who follow the Folk Faith will celebrate the Aesir and some will feel closer to the Vanir. In ancient Rome each God had its own cult or college of priests. There was a college to Jupiter, Juno, Mars Vesta, and just about every major God and to many minor ones.

We in the Folk Faith do not signal out Balder exclusively to celebrate above the other Gods. Our interest in Balder is simply recognizing that the truth reveal through Balder will lead to the resurrection of all the Gods and our people. He is the vehicle that Odin chooses as the instrument of his rebirth. By recognizing Balder's significance we are working Odin's will and ensure the return of all the Gods and the reestablishment of their domain over our people—the establishment of Gimli.

The way of the Folk Faith must respect and honor all the Gods yearly. For all of the Gods collectively comprise the totality of the All-Father.

*“Wise men give the Unique Being more than one name.”*

—Hymn of the Rig-Veda III, 7

*“Vrihaspati is our Father, who contains all the Gods.”*

—Hymn of the Rig-Veda III, 18

*“He who is our Father creates all, contains all beings: God alone, he has made the other Gods. Everything that exists acknowledges him as master... You knew He who has created all things; it is the same as the one who is within you.”*

—Hymn of the Rig-Veda CXI, 11

“His names are many, but He is One.”

### **III: BONDING OR MAKING SACRIFICE:**

The best way to establish and strengthen the bonds between the Gods and ourselves are through exchanging of gifts. The Gods gave us our lives, our awareness, our wisdom, and our souls and everything we need in life to survive and flourish. In return we give love, celebration and our blessings every year during the holy days by feasting and gathering together to recognize the Gods. When we speak their names or recite poems and songs of the Gods, or toast and drink to them, we are strengthening the bonds between the Gods and ourselves. All these acts strengthen their hold upon the Midgard, and strengthen their influence in the affairs of humanity.

The Gods learn from us, as well as teaching us. As they fill us with life and awareness, so do we give the same back to them. There is an exchange of the Life-Force between man and the Gods. The Gods draw strength from us as we remember and celebrate them, not just in ceremony, but in everyday activities. Even by wearing a simple rune or symbol like Thor’s hammer around your neck or from your belt helps to strengthen the power of the Gods. By remembering them and maintaining an awareness of their importance in helping us through life, we are always strengthening the bonds between ourselves and the Gods, and increasing their influence over Middle Earth.

### **IV: WHAT WE BELIEVE:**

1) We believe that the Gods are our ancestors. The Gods are living deities and are all united with the All-Father through his Life-Force. The All-Father existed before the beginning of time, and gave order to the Yawning Void and rules over the nine worlds.

2) We believe the Gods are inherently good and give order to the universe. This order is good and right. They hold back the destructiveness of the chaos and want us, their children, to always do what is right. The Gods are our forebears, and we are their children. The Aesir and the Vanir are the same Gods in different guises that all Indo-Europeans celebrated.

3) We share the same Life-Force as the Gods and they live through in our DNA, in our blood. Therefore, it is imperative that we remain pure in body and spirit and always be proud of whom we are, and what we are. All the Gods and Goddesses are our friends and part of our past and our future.

4) We believe the Folk Faith is the true religion of our people. The Gods of the Folk Faith are the true Gods of our people because we share the same Life-Force and the same blood. Though we respect all other Gods and beliefs, we recognize they are foreign and alien to the soul of our people. Every race or people should seek to re-establish the ancient bonds with the Gods of their ancestors.

5) We believe that every member of our race is our brothers and sisters. We are all related because we all share the same Life-Force and blood. We are the chosen of our Gods, and both individually and collectively it is our duty to spread the truth of the Folk Faith and the message of Balder's return.

6) We believe that our people must return to our Gods, but they must do it willingly. Only those who are pure in body and spirit can walk in the light of the Balder. Therefore, no one should be forced to join the Folk Faith, or be retained against their wills. Only the strong can walk in the Light of Balder. Only the strong can ride with Odin. Only the chosen will live with Freyja in Folkvang or with Odin in Valhalla.

7) We believe that Ragnarok has come and gone, and Balder is Odin's instrument for the return of the Gods. Balder is waiting in Hel to return and herald in a new, golden age that is Gimli, for our people. Balder will return when the Folk faith has once again become strong and powerful. Only then will the Life-Force of our Folk be strong enough to ensure that the influence of the Gods over Middle Earth will bring about the resurrection of Balder and the establishment of Gimli.

8) We believe that the Folk Faith is the best religion for our people, and provides the healthiest way of life for our people. Our faith is built on honor, self-reliance, responsibility to each other, our family, friends and other members of our Folk. We seek to strength those qualities that the Gods most favor, honor, honestly, truthfulness, joyfulness, industriousness, forbearance, justice, and the willingness to stand up for what is right, in us.

9) We believe that the salvation of our people lies within us. The Life-Force of the Gods is the same Life-Force that gives us life. The Gods reside within each and everyone one of us. They reside in our blood, in our DNA, and when we desecrate our blood and DNA, we cause harm to the Gods. It is through the purity of life through the Folk Faith that will strengthen the Life-Force of the Gods and ensure the resurrection of Balder.

## **V: THE GODS SPEAK FROM WITHIN US:**

Odin is the unifying will that preserves and supports the entire pantheon of the Gods. He is the unifying force, the quickening, creative will within every individual of the Folk. It is believed that once Tyr was held higher than Odin. Another tale claims Thor was the primary God of the Aesir. A tale by Saxo Grammaticus tells of a time when Odin left Asgard on some business. In his absence Tyr sat in his High Seat. Tyr was supposed to institute individual cults for each God and Goddess, which only cause a growing chaos to spread throughout the cosmos. When Odin returned, he reasserted his authority and the unity of Asgard. Order was restored to the cosmos. Sacrifices were made to all the Gods and Goddesses. This tale represents the unity and separative qualities of all the Gods and Goddesses. Odin is the embodiment of the unity of the Odinnic force and its separate and individual God-forces that are the individual Gods and Goddesses.

The dual nature in which the Gods affect our lives is through the personal bonds we forge with them, affecting us in a personal way by shaping our personalities. The other way is rooted in the genetic, collective group we belong to. We are members of an ethnic group or nation—a folk. Each of us has a personal and group destiny. The former is the course that our individual lives take, the latter are how the fate of the group we belong to, affects us. The Gods reside within, in our blood, genes or DNA. This link also bonds us together as a people. It is the life-force of the folk. What we do as individuals will affect the Gods, but what we do collectively as a folk, will have a profound effect on the Gods.

The Gods are living entities. They exist independently of our individual psyche. They never died off with the introduction of Christianity. They merely fell asleep, but even in this state they were able to transform the alien creed into a neo-pagan religion. The Gods cannot die so long as we as a people survive. We are their children, their flesh and blood descendants. They are simply waiting for the call of Balder to bring them back. This will be accomplished through our celebration of them. Our celebration of the Gods feeds their life-force. The life-force is a pool of energy that can be tapped into and used to shape our surroundings. That's why it is necessary to celebrate the Gods through ritual. It revitalizes and replenishes the life-force and strengthens the bonds between us and the Gods.

The bonds with the Gods can only be forged through personal experiences. You cannot find the Gods by searching for them in texts or holy scripts. To find the Gods, and forge a bond with them you have to go where they reside. Since they reside within you, you have to search within yourself. It is good to study the old myths and legends, but this by itself will not awaken them within you. It will help to open your subconscious mind, like opening a doorway to their realm, but you must make the conscious decision to enter. By passing through you will enter the collective memory pool of the racial mind of the folk. According to Carl Jung, the Gods as ideals, archetypes and images have been part of the subconscious mind of humans over thousands of years. They cannot be dislodged and will influence every aspect of mankind's thoughts and actions for thousands of years to come.

# 3

## *IN THE BEGINNING*

### **I: THE ALL-FATHER:**

Before the beginning of time, before the great convulsion that gave birth to the universe and the nine worlds, there was always, the All-Father. The oldest of the Gods is the All-Father, and he is the unseen and the uncreated. He existed from the beginning of time and has many names. He is the God without a name and possesses many names. He is sometimes known as the Lord of Hosts, Lord of the Spear, Smither, All-knowing, Fulfiller of wishes, Farspoken, Shaker, Burner, destroyer, Protector and Gelding. This last name refers to the Yggdrasill, the World-Tree, which means Odin's horse. Odin rides his horse, the World-Tree, which means he rides himself because Odin is the All-Father born in the guise of the father of the Gods. The All-Father was known by the most ancient of our people, the original Aryans before they separated into many different tribes. His memory lived on among the Greeks, who called him Ouranos—the God of the Sky, who came to his wife in the night, Mother Earth, and covered her entirely, causing his son, Kronos to thrust free. And with his left-hand Kronos took a huge sickle and cut off Ouranos' manhood, casting it behind his back. This is not unlike the evolution in the Norse religion where the All-Father is born as Buri, an androgynous entity, who gave life to Bor. Bor took a giantess as a wife (Mother Earth) and gave birth to Odin, Vili and Ve. These are just a few of the names he is known as.

The All-Father lived before the universe existed and before time. He rules all the universe and the nine worlds in it, and he rules with absolute power. The universe came into being through the explosive force of the power of his will. He has power over it and the nine worlds, and all things, great and small.

All men who live a life of decency and right will be with him in that place called Gimli or Vingolf, but the wicked shall not know him. They shall exist in the world of the dead known as Hel, and from there to Niflheim, which is indeed



in the depths of the universe, lowest of the nine worlds. His Life-Force is the sum total of the Gods and Goddesses. The All-Father is supreme universal force that gave birth to Odin and once again as Balder. He is the sum total of the entire Aesir and the Vanir, and truly all the Gods and Goddesses of all the old faiths of our ancestors. He was born in the divine trinity as Odin, Vili and Ve. The All-Father is a force that is constantly evolving. He is constantly changing form into new manifestations—Buri—Bor—Odin, Vili and Ve-Balder.

Our fore bearers, the original inhabitants of Europe, considered him the divine and associated him with the sky. In their original tongue he was known as Djevs. As they spread out across the face of the earth. The original speech divided into many variations. He took many names—Dyaus in India, Zeus in Greece, Ju (piter) in Rome and Tiwaz among the Goths. He might also have been called Deivos (divine) in the original tongue. In Rome he was also referred to as Divis (divine) or Divum (sky), and in Lithuania as Devas (sky-God). The All-father has always been known among our people as a sky-God. The sky is not just the atmosphere above us, but the entire universe.

## II: GINNUNGAGAP:

In the beginning there was nothing but chaos, darkness and confusion that filled a gigantic cleft, an abyss. It was so vast that its dimensions were beyond the comprehension of man or God. It was time before the universe was born. This abyss was the Yawning Gulf, a mighty void known to the Norse as the Ginnungagap. The Greeks referred to the void as Chaos, and it was filled with creative powers. The chaotic void was not empty, but a bi-polar universe. At one end was Niflheim, the home of fog and ice, a realm of eternal darkness, frozen ether and biting cold. It is the realm of eternal winter wrapped in fog and mist. At the opposite end was Muspellheim, the realm of unspeakable heat, quenchless fire, and overhanging with clouds of black ashes and fiery sparks. In the midst of whose blinding heat and light sat Surtur, guarding the kingdom of fire with his flaming sword and ruling his many sons, destroyers of worlds, was the flaming force that inhabited that region.

“Surtur with his fiery sword,  
A creature of eternal flame,  
Muspellhem is his ward,  
In end of time, the nine worlds’ bane.”  
(Robert Blumetti)

Robert Hoerbigger wrote that the creation of our universe came about from a great explosion resulting from the union of fire and ice. Science today tells us that the universe was born in a similar explosion known as the Big Bang, caused by opposing forces. Freezing ice and burning fire, from which the universe was formed. Opposite forces pulled and tugged—matter and anti-matter—Light and Darkness, the forces of opposites created all life. This elemental truth is the will of the All-Father.

In the center of Niflheim was the Hvergelmir, the Roaring Cauldron, that surged and boiled up the fount of all waters. Twelve great rivers flowed from the Roaring Cauldron, collectively known as the Elivagar, though only eleven are named: Svoel the cool, Gunnthra the defiant, hurrying Fjorn and bubbling Fimbulthul, fearsome Slid and storming Hrid, Sylg the devouring, Ylgr the she-wolf, broad Vid and Leipt which streaked like lightning, and freezing Gjoll and the unnamed river that flows near to the gate bars of Hel.

The Roaring Cauldron was a mighty geyser of tumescent, tumultuous waters. It resembles the ancient Greek stream of Okeanos, which is referred to as the origin of the Gods. It is also referred to as the proto-sea that surrounds the world, or nine-worlds of the World-Tree, just as Okeanos is also a proto-universal sea. From the earliest time, the Greeks tell us that the waters of life flowed from Okeanos to all corners of the universe and flowed back again in a vast circle of life. The waters are the forces of life, the life-force of the universe and whether its called Okeanos or Hvergelmir, the Roaring Cauldron is the essence of the Life-Force of the universe.

The icy waters welled up from the Roaring Cauldron, flowing out through the Cosmos, from time immemorial, yeasting through it life and death and hardening into ice. It froze and formed the eternal glaciers that continued to grow and expand, hanging suspended. Rising from the block of ice was a poisonous scum, frozen into rime. This congealed fog grew and spread over everything in Niflheim. When it mixed with the heat and flames of Muspellheim, in the yawning, a bottomless abyss that existed between the realm of ice and the realm of fire, a great combustion was caused.

Black and fathomless, the rivers of yeasting ice and burning fires poured with soundless fury. In the eternal depths of its darkness they congealed, and hung in great masses from the edges of the abyss. Heaving and crushing ice exploded as it mixed with the flames from the furnaces of Muspellheim. Over the awful chasm and its silent cataracts icy fogs gathered and bitter winds swept. Against the whirling snows and shifting fogs out of Niflheim the leaping flames and floating fires of Muspellheim fling broad beams of light far into the sunless abyss, and sending

a wide glow through the drifting snows. Glittering sparks shot into the silent space above and floated far toward the north like stars that had wandered from their course. As the icy mists met the burning heat in the upper air, it hung motionlessly for a brief moment and then fell drop by drop into the abyss, and there, out of heat and cold, fire and fog, in darkness and solitude, the fire life was formed. This great combustion of fire and ice caused life to form, and come into being.

### III: YMIR AND AUDHUMLA:

As the forces of the two extremes of the Ginnungagap joined in the center, the icy streams of frothing, yeasty venom out of Niflheim mixed with the burning sparks of fire that flew out of Muspellheim. As the extremes of the opposing forces joined and changed into a harmonious condition of rime or hoarfrost, it quickened the yeast, filling the central space with layer upon layer of the life-giving forces until it finally took form. This continuous action was the will of the unseen and the uncreated All-father. It finally gave shape in the form of a gigantic creature known as Ymir (the Roarer) or Orgelmir (seething clay). He was to personify the rime formed from the virile pulsation of the light-energy from the fiery realm, and the dark-energy which contain yeast, salt and venom, which is the elemental essence of life from the realm of ice. Ymir was the first of the rime or frost giants.

Being bi-sexual, Ymir possessed the reproductive qualities of both male and female forces of nature. From Ymir were born two races of giants. While sleeping, he engendered from under his left arm a male and female through his perspiration. This race of giants embodied the beneficence of nature, but uncontrolled. The male was named Bolthorn and his daughter was Bestla. From one of his feet was born a six-headed giant, named Bergelmir, who became the father of all the frost or rime giants. These giants were the personification of the uncontrolled destructive forces of the universe.

As Ymir groped through the darkness and gloom, searching for something to eat, he discovered the great bovine, Audhumla (the nourisher). She was formed from the same coagulating forces that formed Ymir. From her four udders flowed four streams of milk and gave nourishment to Ymir. Audhumla, in turn, sought out nourishment and found from the frozen drizzle by licking the salty rime. As she licked the ice with her rough tongue, a form of a being appeared. It was born of the ice and the nourishing process of the licking tongue. This was Buri (the producer), an androgynous being. Buri produced a son, Borr, who took Bestla as a mate. From the joining of Borr (Born), who represented order and Bestla, rep-

resenting the beneficent forces of nature, was born three sons, Odin, Vili and Ve. This divine triad was entrusted with the mission of giving order to the universe.

#### **IV: ODIN, VILI AND VE:**

Odin, Vili and Ve were the first Holy Triad or Holy Trinity. The children of Bergelmire, the giants, became aware of Buri, his son, Borr. They began waging war against the new race of Gods. War between these two races was inevitable because they represent the opposing forces of order and chaos. This titanic struggle lasted for eons. Neither race was able to gain the upper hand until Borr took Bestla as his wife and produced his three sons, Odin (spirit), Vili (will) and Ve (holy). There is an intricate symmetry to the force of Odin, Vili and Ve. Odin is the inspiration that creates an idea. Vili is the will that transforms an idea into reality. Ve is the sacred that gives individuality to the creation. The three must work together for creation to occur.

The union between Borr and Bestla was between the beneficent natural forces of nature and discipline, thus creating a force that could counter the uncontrolled destructive forces of nature. With their assistance, the Gods were eventually able to defeat the giants. The Holy Triad or Holy Trinity, was able to end the war by slaying the most powerful of the frost giants, the great Ymir. As Ymir's life was extinguished, his blood poured out of him to flood the Cosmos, producing a great deluge. The entire race of Froze or Rime giants perished in this flood, all except for two giants—Bergelmir and his wife. They survived the blood flood and eventually took up abode in Jotunheim. There they reproduced a new race of giants, who continued to feud with the Gods and sought vengeance for their defeat by them.

The Gods or Aesir (pillars and supporters of the world), set about repairing the destruction that was inflicted upon the Cosmos by their great struggle with the giants. It was their nature to give order where there was only chaos. Borr's sons decided to give shape and order to the corpse of the father of chaos, Ymir. They butchered his corpse and used its parts to construct the universe out of it.

#### **V: YGGDRASILL:**

First the Gods slew Ymir and from his proto-matter they gave shape to the universe according to rune patterns, motions set in and it became a living organic, evolving entity. This is what we know as the world tree—Yggdrasill. It would be correct to call it the cosmic tree. Because we are speaking of matters that exist on

other dimensions from which we exist, our perception of them is clouded. This is because each individual must try to catch a glance of the cosmic tree through the enlightening of his shamanistic power. It is like collecting little bits of a gigantic puzzle, in which thousands of different people each have one or two pieces, but it is even more complex because the puzzle is a living entity and constantly growing and changing shape. The idea of a world-tree was common among the ancient Indo-Europeans: the Greeks called the tree Gogard and in it lived the serpent, Ladon; Zeus created tree races of man from the ash tree; the Hindus pictured creation as a as an ash tree that they called Ashvatta, with it roots in the Absolute and its seven branches representing the seven planes of existing and hung downward; the Iranians called the ash tree Homa; the druids honored the oak tree as a symbol of the mundane tree of life.

The Yggdrasill is a construct of the nine worlds. This gives us a view of the primary structure of the cosmos. At the center of the Yggdrasill is Midgard or Middle Earth. This is the material world of the universe that we inhabit. It is in the middle of *GINNUNGAGAP*. To the north is Niflheim; to the south is Muspellheim; to the east is Jotunheim; and to the west is Vanaheim. Along the central axis—the Irminsal—running through the center of Midgard, the realms above and below are arrayed. Directly below Midgard is Svartalfheim, and below this realm is Hel. Just above Midgard is Ljossalfheim, and above this realm is Asgard.

The structure of the cosmic order that is the nine worlds of the Yggdrasill is one of the vertical intersecting the horizontal. This is the intersection between the conscious and the unconscious. The realms of light exist above Midgard while those of darkness exist below. Around Midgard, on the horizontal plane are the forces of the material world. These are fire and ice, positive and negative, pulled and pushing against each other. These forces of both the psychic and physical planes of existence meet in the center—in Midgard.

The entire Cosmic tree is balanced by the qualities of the eight opposing worlds outside of Midgard; Asgard balances Hel, Ljossalfheim balances Svartalfheim, Muspellsheim balances Niflheim, and Vanaheim balances Jotunheim.

Edred Thorsson, in his book, *RUNELORE*, on page 156, he has an excellent description of the qualities of the nine worlds of the Yggdrasill. Let me quote him here.

“ASGARD: A realm of consciousness that is in and of itself complex, with many enclosures and halls within it, among them Valhalla, Hall of the Fallen. The abode of the fetch, and the house of the spirit.

LJOSSALFHEIM: Broad expanses of light (which also contain other sub-planes). The abode of mind and memory—the intellect.

MIDGARD: Middle-Earth. In the Cosmos this is material manifestation—earth. In the makeup of man this is the body, but also the all-potential of the self. In Midgard all the worlds meet.

SVARTALFHEIM: Abode of the hamr (shape or hide). A “subterranean” world of darkness where shapes are forged. The realm of the emotions.

HEL: The realm of the instincts. Abode of stillness and inertia—unconsciousness. The final resting place of the soul on the non-Erulian.

NIFLHEIM: The realm of mist becoming ice, abode of contraction and magnetism. The force of antimatter, a point constantly pulling in on itself, like a “black hole.”

MUSPELLSHEIM: The realm of fiery sparks, abode of expansion and electricity. The force of pure energy constantly expanding away from itself.

VANAHEIM: The realm of organic patterning and coalescence—water. Abode of forces in fruitful and stable balance.

JOTUNHEIM: A realm in constant motion, seeking to oppose and give resistance to whatever it meets. Force of dissolution and deception. Reactive power of destruction (necessary to evolutionary change.)”

What is interesting is that there are twenty-four pathways among the nine worlds. These pathways hold the Cosmic Tree together and give shape to the tree. It should be mention that there is also twenty-four runes in the Futhark, which correspond to the twenty-four pathways.

The Yggdrasill was created by the All-Father. This is not only the Cosmic Tree, but also the tree of time and life. It was a huge ash. The ash tree is one of the biggest and largest of trees. Its leafy branches spread out in all direction, cover the entire sky and heavens above the nine worlds. Three of its roots drew nourishment from three wells. One of its roots reached far down into the well of Hvergelmir, in the icy regions of Niflheim. This root was being gnawed by a terrible serpent, Nidhogg, and it was helped in its work by countless snakes, knowing that the tree’s death spelled the downfall of the Gods. The second roots reached into Mimir’s well located in Jotunheim. This well contains all knowledge and wisdom and is guarded by a giant named Mimir. The three roots grew out of the Urdar well in Asgard, where three Norns poured water on the root and with mud from Urdar. Here the Gods hold council.

From these three wells the great ash grew nourishment and from their waters it obtained its great heights. The upper most branches are called Lerad (peace-

giver), and overshadows Odin's great hall. A great eagle is perched on Lerad, and between his eyes sits the falcon named Vedfölnir. The eagle represents the spirit, or the Light and is the opposite of Nidhogg, which represents the material and the Darkness. A squirrel called Ratatoskr runs up and down the trunk between the dragon and the eagle. He is a typical busybody and tale-teller, hoping to stir up conflict between them, and represents the shaman, who links the two opposing forces in the Cosmos. There are also four stags, Dain, Dvalin, Duneyr, and Durathor, who eat of the tree's leaves.

Yggdrasill is a regenerative force. It not only provides substance to nourish the Cosmos, but is the fount for the rebirth of man after Ragnarok. A man and a woman survive Ragnarok hidden within the Yggdrasill. Its leaves never wither and Odin's goat also eats of the leaves. One name means Odin's horse, and the horse is also a regenerative force. It produces a mead Yggdrasill has many names that ensure eternal young and strength for the Gods. The tree is the force that Odin rides, and maintains order throughout the Cosmos. The association of the tree with a horse, or Odin's horse is simple. Odin hangs himself from the branches of Yggdrasill—a sacrifice from himself, to himself. The tree is Odin's gallows and the gallows can be interpreted as the horse that the hanged ride. This is also why the tree is also known as the terror-tree.

Yggdrasill is also known as the cosmic pillar, because it holds up the universe. It is the cosmic axis which the entire Cosmos and its nine worlds revolve around. Most religions speak of some form of "Tree of Life." This is also true of the Folk Faith. In the Folk Faith is known as the Yggdrasil. Ygg has many meanings that include, ancient, old, ageless, eternal and terrible. Odin is sometimes called Yggjung or "old-young," and the Yggdrasil is known as "Odin's steed." The Yggdrasil is the Life-Force of the cosmos, and Odin controls and rides this force for his own use. Odin is the essence of an orderly and disciplined universe, and he gives direction to the Life-Force, and thus is imagined as riding it. This is why the Tree of Life or World Tree is referred to as Odin's Steed.

The Yggdrasil is also known as Odin's Gallows. Odin hung himself on the Yggdrasil, as a sacrifice from himself to himself. He died and it was later reborn. Thus, the Yggdrasil is not only an instrument of life, it is also an instrument of death. Birth and death are the ying and the yang, the beginning and the end of all things. All life is born and will die, but death is not the end, for there is always rebirth. And just as Odin and the Gods will die during Ragnarok, they will be reborn in the Golden Age of Gimli. The instrument of their rebirth is Balder, thus, Balder is the Life-Force. He is the essence of the Yggdrasil and the forces of

birth, death and rebirth. Balder is the Life-Force that transcends death, living on pass death. Balder is the after life.

The Yggdrasil draws in nourishment from tree wells. Each well is in a different realm, and one of the Yggdrasil's tree roots grows from each well. One of the roots is watered by a spring in Asgard, the home of the Gods, and is known as the well or spring of Urd. Urd is sometimes translated as pass, but it can also mean ancestral, old or origin. Urd is also the name of one of three female deities known as the Norns. The Norns are the same as the Fates in the ancient Greek religion, and the two religions spring from the same common, ancestral Aryan religion that all our people once practiced before they left their primeval homeland thousands of years ago. The three Norns, or Fates, can see into the past, know the present and see into the future.

The Norns spin the threads of destiny for all living things, mortal and immortal. Urd is also named Origin, and her sisters are known as Becoming (present) and Debt (future). Urd personifies all things that have gone on before, in the past, and is the cause of both present and future. Her sister is Verdande, which means Becoming. This is the present, but is not static. It is the point between the past and the future and is the most dynamic, for it is the point in time when all events are unfolding. It is the point when all decisions are made, and the future is born. These two Norns create the third—Skuld—the future, and it means Debt. By Debt it means something owed, out of balance and must be brought into an equilibrium in the in the future.

The Norns are also mentioned in the Indo-European religion of the Vedic Aryans who settled in India. In their ancient language known as Sanskrit, they are called the Lipikas, which means “scribes” or “recorders.” Just as the Norns record all that takes place, they set the stage for the future. This is also referred to as “Karma.” Karma is the balancing act that is the natural law of consequences. You set your own future by your actions in the present, which are recorded in the past. Each individual's action will determine their future by the decisions the individual makes. Each individual has its own individual Norn that is called a Hamingja, which in Christian Theology is referred to as your guardian angel. The Norn weaves your destiny by recording your actions in the present, and thus creating the future course in which you will travel. Thus, each of our lives is an interaction of our actions with the Life-Force personified by the Norns.

The second root of the Yggdrasil is known as Mimer's Well and is located in Jotunheim, the realm of the giants. Mimer is a giant. Odin made a deal with Mimer—he forfeited one eye so that he might drink from Mimer's Well—the Well of Knowledge. The eye is hidden at the bottom of the well, and thus a link



between Odin and the flow of knowledge that he receives. It is also said that Odin drinks every morning from this well. As the well of Urd is located in Asgard, the realm of inspiration, the well of Mimer is in the realm of matter—the giant’s realm. Mimer is the progenitor of all giants, the timeless root of Ymir-Oergalmer, from which the worlds are formed. Here we have a link between inspiration and matter through Odin. Odin’s eye is immersed into the world of matter (Mimer’s Well), which gives knowledge of the past. Odin, who personifies consciousness, makes the sacrifice of his eye, or part of his vision, to obtain the right to drink from the Well of Knowledge, thus obtaining wisdom. Inspiration and knowledge creates wisdom and insight into the future.

Mimer is eventually killed by Njord (time) and his lifeless body is thrown into a swamp (the “waters” of space), but his head (knowledge) is retrieved by Odin, and pickled in honey (preservation) and sets it up to confer with it every day. The head of Mimer is the knowledge that is actually contained within Mimer’s brain. This knowledge is about the material universe or what we call today—science.

Yggdrasil’s third root reaches down into Niflheim (the realm of mist). The root is watered by the well, Hvergaelmer, the source of all waters or “rivers of lies.” This is actually the many different forms of life throughout the world. It is Niflheim that is the source of life. It is the “seething cauldron of life,” or the “primordial soup,” in which science claims all life on earth originated.

The first root, which originates in Asgard, the higher realm of existence, the realm of the Gods, is the source of inspiration and where the Norns wove the destinies of all living things, even the Gods. It creates order in the universe and this includes time as well as space and matter (the three Norns are past, present and future).

The second root is watered in Jotunheim, where material knowledge that is science mingles with consciousness and inspiration, when Odin sacrifices his eye and places it in the well. From this union are born wisdom and insight into the future.

The third root originates in Niflheim, and is nourished by the sources of all rivers or rivers of life. It gives form and hierarchy to all life.

## **VI: THE CREATION OF THE WORLD:**

After they killed Ymir, Odin and his brothers retrieved the giant’s body, and lifting it on their shoulders, they placed it in the center of the yawning abyss. From the corpse they began to fashion the earth and the heavens. From its flesh they molded the earth. From its icy-cold blood they formed the oceans and seas. From

his eyebrows they constructed bulwarks and ramparts to hedge it into place. They took his teeth and formed the cliffs, and from his bones they build the mountains and hills. All forms of vegetation were formed from his curly hair. They then took their creation and placed it in the middle of the oceans, which ringed it on all sides.

The Gods then hoisted the icy-blue unwieldy skull and lift it above the earth. In this way they skillfully created the infinite heavens. They then flung the brains of Ymir throughout the expanse beneath the vault and fashioned the clouds. Four dwarfs were chosen to support the heavenly vault. The Gods stationed the four dwarfs, Nordi, Sundri, Austri and Westri at four points and placed the heavens upon their shoulders. These four dwarfs became known as the four corners of the world—North, South, East and West.

Pleased with their work so far, the Gods seized sparks and glowing embers from Muspellheim and arranged them carefully in the heavens. Each star was placed in a fixed course in the heavens. They glowed throughout the night sky and men came to call them stars.

The Gods now harnessed two steeds, Arvaki (the early walker) and Alsvin (the rapid goer) to a sun chariot that they created from molten gold that they took from Muspellheim. Fearing that the heat of the sun chariot will harm the horses, they constructed a huge highway of cold air for the horses to race across, and protecting them from the burning rays of the sun. For additional protection, the fashioned a great shield, Svalin (the cooler), behind the steeds. Another chariot was built for the moon. Since the moon's rays were not harmful, but provided illumination at night, there was no need for protection against its rays. The steed, Alsvider (the all-swift), was his name.

## VII: MANI AND SOL:

The steeds tied to the chariot were growing anxious to begin the tide across the heavens, but who would guide them? There was no one to ride in the chariots. The Gods searched for two suitable candidates and found them when they spied two beautiful offsprings of the giant by the name of Mundilfari. Maundilfari was proud of his children and loved them greatly, and named them after the two newly created orbs, Mani (the moon), and Sol (the sun). When Sol married Glaur (glow), a son of Surtur. This union angered the Gods and they snatched the two youth away. The Gods counseled the two youth about the dangers of the sons of Muspellheim and finally convinced them of their transgressions. Muni

and Sol agreed to guide the chariots across the sky each day. So they were placed in the sky and happily rode the sun and the moon until the end of time.

Mani led the way as he guided the moon on its path, deciding when it would rise and set. As he rode alone, he saw two beautiful children. Their names were Bil and Hjuki. He noticed them carrying water every night, all night, suffering as they did to the delight of their cruel father, Vidfinn. Each night as he rode across the sky, he watched them suffering under the tyranny of their father, and finally, not being able to stand it any longer, he flew down and plucked them from Midgard, and placed them in the chariot with him. Our ancestors immortalized in the children's rhyme, "Jack and Jill," and they can still be seen on the face of the full moon.

From another giant living in Jotunheim, Narvi, the Gods summoned his daughter, Nott (night), and entrusted her to come for another chariot, a dark one, drawn by a black steed, Hrim-faxi (frost mane), from whose name the dew and frost dropped down to the earth. Nott was swarthy in skin and possessed beautiful black hair and dark eyes like her entire family. She had married thrice. First she married Naglfari, and had a son named Aud. She also had a daughter named Joerd (earth) with a second husband by the name of Annar. Finally, she married Dolling, her third husband, who was related to the sons of Bor, and was shining with light and beautiful. With him she produced a son named Day. So beautiful was this last son that the Gods provided him with another chariot pulled by a white steed, Skin-faxi (the shining mane). From his mane the golden rays of light illuminated the entire world, bringing light and happiness to all, nurturing the earth and turning it green and lush.

## VIII: THE WOLVES, SKOELL AND HATI:

Good is never free from the threat of evil. The inhabitants of the northern regions of Europe saw the Moon (Mani) and Sun (Sol), as good, but they were constantly being chased by two terrible wolves, Skoell (repulsion) and Hati (hatred). Their purpose was to intercept the two celestial bodies and devour them. They desire to plunge the universe into darkness, and are destructive forces, but they also represent the natural forces that keep the Sun and the Moon in motion. This symbiosis of good and evil, chaos and order are what holds the universe in place. They are part of the antithetic nature of the cosmos—attraction and repulsion.

Our ancestors often thought there were times when the wolves might have overtaken and tried to swallow the moon and sun. This happened during the

luna and solar eclipses. As the shadow of one heavenly body blocked out the other, people would gather and shout, making terrible noise by any means they could to frighten and distract the wolves so that the celestial bodies might escape from the snapping jaws of the beasts. Once they had escaped, they could resume their course, speeding away even more rapidly from their perusing the hungry monsters chasing after them once more, until the end of time.

The Gods not only placed the Sun, Moon, Day and Night in motion, they named the different shares of the time of day with such names as Evening, Midnight, Morning, Forenoon, Noon and Afternoon. All were responsible for governing their individual part of the daily cycle. The Gods also set in motion the entire yearly cycle of seasons. Summer was a direct descendant of the giant, Svastud (the mild and lovely), and inherited his warm and sunny disposition. The enemy of Summer is the son of the vile, dark giant, Vindsual. Vindsual's son is Winter and his personality is cold and hard, and his breath is the icy air and freezing mists.

## **IX: DWARFS AND ELVES:**

After the Gods destroyed Ymir, they began fashioning the universe from his body. That's when they found a host of maggot-like creatures living within Ymir's flesh. The Gods took pity on these horrid and disgusting creatures. Rather than destroying them, the Gods gave them new forms and endowed them with superior intelligence. They were also given the gift of marvelous craftsmanship. Next the Gods divided them into two very different species. Some were dark and black in both appearance and nature. They are known as the Black Dwarfs or Dark Elves and are renowned for being treacherous, cunning so the Gods banished them to Svartalfheim, situated underground. They were forbidden to surface by day, and if they did, the sun would turn them into stone. Mankind gave them many names that included Dwarfs, Trolls, Gnomes, Goblins, Hobgoblins, Brownies, Bogies, Lars, or Kobolds. They spend all their time living underground, digging mines and tunnels, exploring the recesses of the earth, mining precious metals and jewels. In great foundries they worked as blacksmiths, fashioning great devices and weapons of marvelous power and magic. The remainder of these small creatures was fair and beautiful to behold. Their nature was joyous and good. These are the Fairies and Elves, or Light Elves and were sent to live in the airy realm known as Alfheim or Ljossalfheim, which is situated between Midgard and Asgard. From here they often descend to Midgard to direct and guide

the changing of the season, attending to the flowers and plants, caring for the animals and plants and dancing on the silvery moonbeams at night.

## **X: THE CREATION OF MAN:**

After creating Midgard or Manaheim, the Gods decided to create mankind to inhabit this world. As the sons of Bor were traveling through Midgard, they came upon two trees lying upon the ground near the seashore. One tree was an ash while the other was an elm. The three brother-Gods who were one, hewed them into human form resembling a man and a woman. As the Gods admired the two pieces of inanimate wood, Odin decided to breed the spirit of life into them by giving them souls. Vili then gave them the gifts of sharp wits and feeling hearts (rational intelligence and emotions). Finally, Ve gave them the final gifts of senses and locomotion. The man they named Ash and the woman they named Embla (embla is actually a vine that clings to the ash tree).

With the gifts of the Gods, they were sent to live and populate all of Midgard. With the powers of speech, love and intelligence they set to work building nations and communities. Unlike all other religions, our religion is the only one that believes that the first man and woman were made from living things, and not from dirt. Because the Gods gave mankind some of their most precious gifts they took special interest in their children, and watched over them as they went about settling the four corners of Midgard.

## **XI: THE BIFROST BRIDGE:**

Across the vast expanse between Midgard and Asgard stretches a flaming bridge of multicolored light. This bridge is the Rainbow bridge, or Bifrost bridge. It is a sacred bridge built of fire, air and water, and over it travel the Gods to and fro between Midgard and Asgard, all except mighty Thor. The Thunder God never travels across the bridge for fear that his great strength and weight and the power of his thunderbolts might destroy it. The Gods travel across the bridge to hold council every day at the Well of Urdar, situated at the foot of one of the mighty roots of the Yggdrasil.

At the head of the bridge, where it passes into Asgard, the White God Heimdall stands ever on eternal vigil. No one can pass him without his permission, and with his great power of sight and hearing no one can sneak passed him. He can see the end of infinity and hear time passing. Besides the power of his senses, he is armed with a great trenchant sword. When he sees danger approaching, he calls

all to alert by blowing a terrible warning on his mighty horn, the Giallar Horn, which only he has the power of breath to use. But when he sees friends approaching, he blows a soft and sweet note through the horn to welcome the guest.

## **XII: GIANTS:**

The giants represent the raw, uncontrolled and destructive forces of Nature in the most primitive form. The most ancient peoples of the world once worshiped them as power forces of nature. They feared the giants because they could not understand them. Sometimes they were called etins, titans, Fomorians, or giants. This practice of worshiping the destructive forces in hope of placating, as a means of controlling their destructive power, is probably held over from the time of the Neanderthals. When the first humans entered Europe, they began to worship a race of Gods that in Europe that were associated with the Mother Earth. In most Indo-European pagan religions the Mother Earth is usually a giantess.

## **XIII: THE WAR BETWEEN THE AESIR AND THE VANIR:**

The Vanir was a different race of Gods from the Aesir, described as beings of shining light. They inhabited Vanaheim, located in the upper air. It is a realm of air and light. Being creatures of air and light, they never visited Midgard or Asgard, and did not know of the existence of the Aesir, nor did the Aesir know of them.

But Odin, the All-Knowing, learned of their existence and sent messengers to seek out the Vanir, but all attempts ended in failure. Odin then decided to seek them out himself. He sat on his High Seat and sent his thoughts out to the Vanir, requesting they send a representative to Asgard. He wanted to form a league between the Aesir and the Vanir, for he knew that both races of Gods were two halves of a whole, and could only be complete in a union of the two races.

For a long time Odin waited without any word, but eventually there appeared at the gates of Asgard a maiden, fair and beautiful. She was tall and stately, but sensual and powerful all at the same time. She possessed fair skin, blue eyes and hair the color of the golden rays of the sun. When she moved, her body seemed to shine like gold. She called herself Gullveig, and was welcomed by Odin and the Aesir. Given free movement, she gladly made use of the privilege and moved among the Aesir like a sunbeam. She visited all the great halls of Asgard and

spoke with all the Gods and Goddesses. At first she spoke of her powers to enchant, to create a wand from wood and her abilities as a seer. To all women she bestowed these abilities, but soon she began to speak of gold. She now spoke of nothing but the sparkling luster of gold, and her love of that precious metal. The Aesir listened to her talk of gold and soon grew tired of her, because she talked on nothing else but her love for the metal.

Gullveig then decided to visit Midgard and began to talk of her love of gold to mankind. Her gold-lust passed like a shadow over Midgard. But everywhere that Gullveig went Loki was not far behind. Loki could not resist her beauty and fell deeply in love with Gullveig. But when he approached, she shunned his advances, wounding his pride. The Trickster could not let her affront go without revenge. Wherever she went, Loki followed with poison words, twisting the mean of her words. He called her Hag and the Mother of Evil. He transformed the love and admiration for gold that she taught into lust for wealth and greed. Men began stealing gold and even killing for the metal. Their lust for the metal gave birth to all sorts of evils that never existed. The race of man became corrupt and spoiled.

Odin began to notice a marked change in the affairs of man. The Children of the Gods were no longer happy and free from greed and lust. They were now pre-occupied by a new found lust of material possession. They spent all their time trying to acquire wealth and material possessions. Their obsession with gold overshadowed everything they did and clouded their love for the Gods. They began ignoring the Gods and spent all their time plotting, cheating and even murdering in their pursuit to acquire gold.

Odin called a meeting of the Aesir in his great hall. Gullveig was called to attend, and the High One and the Aesir listened to her speak of nothing else but her love for gold. Loki also attended the meeting and he quickly began to warn the Gods of Gullveig's treachery. He blackened her reputation in the eyes of the Gods and they soon began blaming her for all man's evil doing. Odin finally heard enough and concluded that she was responsible for the darkness that had overcome the Children of the Gods. "You speak in spells and charms because you are a sorceress and enchantress. You have introduced the gold-lust to Midgard where it was unknown. Your sorcery has put an end to the Golden Age, and now you try to bewitch the Aesir with the same illness of mind and spirit." Turning to the assembled Gods and Goddesses of Asgard, Odin put a question to them. "What shall we do with this enchantress?"

With a single voice, they cried out. "Put her to death!" And so they seized her, and began throwing spears and shooting arrows at her. But the spears and arrows

passed through her, leaving her unharmed. She stood before them, shining and laughing at their futile attempts to kill her.

They seized her once more, and placed her in a great fire they had built in the hall. The Gods watched as the flames devoured her. The flames and smoke rose high, transforming her beauty into black ashes, but when the flames died down and the smoke disappeared, Gullveig was still standing. She was even more beautiful than before. She shined even brighter, like gold that has been shaped and molded by a goldsmith. The Gods were amazed to see Gullveig laugh, as she glittered and shined before them. Three times they burned her to ashes, but each time she remained unharmed and appeared to grow brighter and more beautiful.

News of her survival spread throughout Asgard and she was given a new name. She was called Heid, the gleaming one. Gullveig decided she had enough of the Aesir's hospitality. She decided to return to Vanaheim, but before she departed, she spoke one last time to the Aesir. "You have accused me of bringing division to mankind, but you are guilty of causing a division to grow among the Gods. I was called by you, Odin, and I came as a messenger of the Vanir. But you have treated me ill and so I will take my leave and return to Vanaheim, and tell my people how guests are treated in Asgard. The choice was yours to make between love and war, and you have chosen the latter."

After saying her fill, she departed, rising upon the golden rays of the sun, she left Asgard and returned to her home in Vanaheim. When she had returned home, Gullveig immediately reported of her ill treatment at the hands of the Aesir. Her tale caused the Vanir to become outraged at how she was treated by the Aesir. They could not understand the Aesir's dislike of the gold-lust, for the Vanir loved everything that had to do with the earth. The Vanir now swore to seek vengeance against the Gods of Asgard, and soon legions of the Vanir were marching towards the walls of Asgard. Their great host crossed the golden rays of sunlight and descended out of the blue skies. But their legions did not go unnoticed.

Odin was sitting on his High Seat in Valeskjalf, and clearly saw the approaching army. He ordered Heimdall to sound the alarm. All of Asgard rallied to the threat that Asgard faced. Soon two great armies were face to face outside the walls of Asgard. Odin raised a spear and flung it at the Vanir. This was the signal for the war to begin between the Aesir and the Vanir.

In the early stages of the war the Vanir clearly had the advantage. They used spells and chants to reduce the walls of Asgard to rubble. They then stormed Asgard, but Odin rallied his forces and forced them back. The Aesir then surged forward, driving the Vanir all the way back to Vanaheim. They then stormed



Vanaheim, inflicting as much damage to the homeland of the Vanir as was inflicted on Asgard. For more years that could be counted the battles raged in the heavens. The flow of the war swung back and forth, but neither side could get the upper hand over the other. Both sides began to grow weary of the fighting.

Odin decided that it was time for talk and called upon the Vanir for a truce. "I am Odin, King of the Aesir," Odin said to the leader of the Vanir. "How are you named, King of the Vanir?"

"I am called Njord, Lord of Vanaheim," the shining king answered. "I do not fight you out of hatred, but out of sorrow—sorrow for the treatment that Gullveig suffered at your hand."

"I too, grief for what might have been," Odin said, "and for the turmoil this war has perpetrated upon both our lands. It was not meant to be. We should be brothers in arms, not opponents."

Njord agreed with Odin, and the two leaders sat down and began to discuss the origins of the war. Odin told Njord of the way Gullveig infected mankind with greed for gold, and how this destroyed the Golden Age. Njord listened and then spoke of the injustice suffered by Gullveig for her attempts to teach the Aesir about the gifts that Mother Earth had to offer. They continued to talk about the war and the guile of the Aesir. Finally they agreed that the war could only hurt both the Aesir and the Vanir, and only the giants would benefit from a continuation of the conflict. Njord agreed to send Gullveig back to Asgard in another guise to teach Odin of the seither magic, and Odin promised to welcome her and teach her of galdor magic. After the exchanging of hostages was agreed upon, both Njord and Odin clasped each others' arm and agreed to live side by side in peace.

"Let only peace exist between us, and I swear that the Vanir will stand by your side against the giants," Njord said. "We will live as one people from here on in; we will never again let minor difference divide us; and we will swear friendship and exchange hostages as proof of our intentions."

Njord and his son, Frey volunteered to go and live with the Aesir. Njord's daughter, Gullveig, now named Freyja also joined them, this time to teach Odin of seither in exchange for knowledge of galdor. Odin welcomed them, not as hostages of a different race, but as equal members of the Aesir. "You may live here in peace," Odin said. "We will give you land to build your halls and palaces so that you might live freely and in honor among the Aesir. And seats you will occupy in all our councils, and your words will carry equal weight as any spoken by the Aesir."

The Aesir accepted and welcome them, even though some objected to the fact that Frey and Freyja were Njord's children by his own sister. Njord became the high priest to preside over sacrifices. Frey was made Lord of Weather and Agriculture, and King of Alfheim. Freyja was appointed Lady of Love and War and the high priestess of seither. Odin also appointed Freyja as the leader of the Valkyries and gave her the honor of choosing first the half of all heroes that the daughters of Odin brought to Asgard. The Vanir and Aesir swore oaths of loyalty to each other and to seal their bond, both the Vanir and Aesir spat into a crock of gold.

Odin took the golden crock, and using the arts that he learned from the wisdom that Mimir bestowed upon him, he created a new man. This man was all wise because he contained the wisdom and essence of both the Aesir and the Vanir. Odin called him Kvasir, and represented the union of the two races of Gods.

For the Vanir, the Aesir sent the wise Mimir and the long-legged Honir to go and live with the Vanir. Honir was one of the most handsome and well-built of the Gods. He was the embodiment of vitality and energy. He was a courageous and wise leader in war and peace. He possessed good judgement and was considered fair in all dealing. Mimir was considered the wisest and second to none when it came to intelligence and understanding. These two were highly regarded by the Aesir and they believed they could maintain the trust of the Vanir.

The Vanir welcomed both Honir and Mimir in Vanaheim. They were impressed by both of them, and they appointed Honir as one of their leaders. Mimir made Honir's right-hand assistant, and he was always ready with good advice to help Honir in governing. The two Aesir made a marvelous team and greatly impressed the Vanir. But when they were separated, it was an entirely different story. Without Mimir to help him, Honir seldom lived up to his reputation. When he was asked a question about some problem by the Vanir, he simply answered: "Let someone else decide." He always answered the same whenever he was asked his opinion when Mimir was not around.

The Vanir grew tired of Honir's procrastinating. They began to think that they were tricked by the Aesir into accepting him as one of their leaders. Eventually their anger got the better of them, and when they could no longer take Honir's circumventions, they seized him and hacked off his head. They sent Honir's head back to Odin. When Odin saw what the Vanir had done, he did not react with anger, but cradled it in sorrow. Taking herbs, he created a brew to preserve the head. The brew was spread all over the head, as Odin recanted spells to prevent it from decaying. Additional chants were sung by Odin to restore the

power of speech to Mimir's head. Forever after Odin relied on Mimir's wisdom and often sought counsel from it.

#### **XIV: THE END OF THE GOLDEN AGE:**

Up to this time the Golden Age existed. During this age there was no evil in Asgard and Midgard. The innocence of the Gods and men passed because of the child of the fire-etins, the King of Lust, poisoned the hearts and minds of men with a lust for gold. Loki was the chief instrument of the end of the Golden Age.

#### **XV: THE BUILDING OF ASGARD'S WALL:**

The Golden Age was passed. The war between the Aesir and the Vanir was long over, but the destruction from that war had still not been repaired. The once great wall that protected Asgard from the giants, now laid in huge mountainous pile of rubble. The Gods were concerned by their realm being defenseless against an attack by the giants. But no one was eager to perform the herculean task of rebuilding the wall. For a long time nothing was done, and Asgard remained defenseless. This was how things remained until one day, a solitary figure rode over the Rainbow Bridge on horseback.

Heimdall, who was always on guard, saw the lone rider from far away. He waited until the rider reached the domain of the Gods and then called him to halt and identify himself and state his business.

"I've come a long way with a proposal for the Gods," the rider said.

"You can tell me your proposal," Heimdall said. He smiled and showed his golden teeth.

"My proposal is for all the Gods and not just their watchman," the man on the horse exclaimed. "I think even the Goddesses might find my proposal of interest."

Heimdall showed his teeth once more, but this time he did not grin. With a stern command, he bid the traveler to ride across the Plains of Idavoll to Glad-sheim. He then warned him to not deviate from his path. Heimdall sent word that the rider was on his way. All the Gods and Goddesses gathered in Glad-sheim. The rider tied his stallion to one of the pillars outside and entered the great hall. Inside he found the Gods and Goddesses waiting for him. Sitting on their high seats were the twelve Gods. And above them all sat Odin. In front of them, the rest of the Gods were standing with the Goddesses.

From his high throne Odin stared down at the dwarfish man, studying him closely. "We have come at Heimdall's bidding. What is your proposal?"

The little man raised his head and looked right back at Odin. "I'll rebuild the wall that once guarded the realm of Asgard."

The Gods and Goddesses began murmuring among themselves. They realized that the dwarfish man was not what he appeared to be.

"I will not only rebuild the wall, but it will be bigger and stronger than it was before," the builder said. "It will be impregnable to any assault. No army of giants will be able to overpower it. Asgard will be secure from any attack coming out of Jotunheim."

"And what are your terms?" Odin said, knowing that the builder would not do it for his love of the Gods.

"I can accomplish the task in eighteen months," the builder said. "Eighteen months after the day I start, I will complete the construction of the wall. Not one day longer or sooner. I must have eighteen months."

"That can be arranged," Odin said, "but now, state your price."

The builder smiled slightly and touched his nose with his index finger. "Yes. My price. I was about to lay it before you. I want Freyja for my wife."

Everyone began talking at once, outraged at the builder's insolence. But the most appalled was Freyja. She stood erect, her head high and chin stuck out. Her eyes grew hard and her most beautiful face turned into a war mask. Her most perfect breasts rose and fell, and her Brising Necklace glittered and flashed. Her white hands were clinched and her feet were planted on the floor. The most beautiful Goddess, even more beautiful than Frigga, Nanna and Sif, was transformed from her motif as Goddess of Love and Beauty into the Goddess of War. All but Odin had to turn their eyes from her, for only the All-Father could look directly at her in this state. She was so outraged that she did not speak. The other Gods and Goddesses in the hall verbalized her outrage for her as they shouted their objections.

"That's impossible," Odin said. His voice was hard and cold like steel. His one eye locked on the dwarfish builder standing before him. "Enough of this talk. This meeting is at an end."

But the builder did not turn to leave. Instead he spoke once again. "Freyja as my wife is not enough," he said. Everyone stopped cold. "I also demand the sun and the moon as part of my price."

Deadly silence filled the hall, but before anyone could react, the wily Loki leaped in between the builder and the Gods and Goddesses.

The Fire Imp's dancing tongue broke the silence that filled the hall. "Less not be too hasty. Every proposal deserves discussion before it's dismissed."

The anger that was growing among the Gods and Goddesses soon turned into interest at Loki's suggestion. They began to wonder what the Sly One was up to.

"We can at the least hold counsel and talk over the proposal our guess has presented to us," Loki said reasonably."

The builder was asked to wait outside as the Gods and Goddesses began discussing his proposal. Freyja was the most disturbed by the willingness of the Gods and Goddesses to even contemplate the thought of accepting the builder's proposal. Her anger quickly turned to fear and she began weeping tears of gold.

"There now, dear Freyja, do not fear." Loki tried to console Freyja by placing his arms around her, but she grew angry once more and pushed him away. Loki ignored her reaction. "I don't propose we actually accept his proposal, but we might be able to turn it to our advantage."

"How?" Odin asked.

"By demanding that the builder complete his task within six months," Loki said.

"That's too short a time for him to complete its construction," Heimdall said.

"He could never finish in six months," many of the Gods agreed.

"Exactly," Loki said and smiled. "He must complete his task in six months."

Odin nodded in agreement. Loki was pleased and believed he had won over the All-Father. His smile grew larger.

"I say, we should put our counter proposal to the builder," Loki said. "If he refuses, we lose nothing, but if he agrees, he most surely will fail, and we'll have most of the wall completed. We can then finish its construction ourselves." Loki jumped and slapped his thigh with excitement.

Many of the Gods still feared risking Freyja, the sun and the moon, but others nodded their approval and even wished they had thought of such a devilish scheme.

The Gods and Goddesses called the builder back into the hall. Odin put the proposal to the builder. "I will agree to your price, but only if you complete the task in six months," Odin said. "If you can build the wall in six months, we will turn the moon and the sun over to you, and you may take Freyja as your bride."

Freyja began weeping once more.

The builder shook his head, but Odin continued to speak. "Tomorrow is the first day of Winter. You must begin the task tomorrow and complete it by the first day of Summer. You must also agree that no one will help. If you do not

complete its construction, even if one brick is missing from the wall, then you forfeit your price. Those are my terms. You may take them or leave them.”

“I don’t see how I can complete the task in six months,” the builder said as he rubbed his chin and looked at the ground. But then he turned his gaze at the lovely Freyja and felt his breath trapped in his throat and his heart beating faster. A stirring swelled in his groin and he knew he must have the Goddess. “I will agree, but only if you will permit me the use of my stallion, Svadilfari.”

Odin shook his head and was about to refuse when Loki spoke up. “Odin, you can’t deny him the use of his stallion. Every builder needs the use of at least one workhorse. The stallion is more a tool than a helper. It is a reasonable request.”

Odin stared at Loki, who closed one eye, patted the side of his nose with his index finger and nodded. For some reason, Odin’s objection disappeared.

“Only your stallion and no one, or nothing else,” he said. “Do you agree?”

“I ask one more thing,” The builder said. Odin was about to object. “It will not affect the turns of the agreement. I ask only for your protection while I endeavor to complete my task. No one should cause harm to me or try and stop me from completing my task.” The builder looked at Thor, knowing his reputation for losing his violent anger. Odin agreed. His request was indeed reasonable.

The builder readily agreed and quickly departed so that he could begin work one second after the midnight, after Odin swore many oaths cementing the bargain.

True to his word, the builder began working instantly after midnight. Long before Early Walker and All Swift appeared in the sky, the sound of great stones being hauled and put into place by him and his stallion, and could be heard throughout Asgard. The builder used a loosely meshed net that he attached to the rear of Svadilfari. He then began heaving huge boulders that seem to grow out of the hills around Asgard, onto the net. They were enormous and twisted, and looked as if they had been there from the beginning of time, and would be there still when everything came to an end. The dwarfish builder proved he possessed great strength. No boulder, no matter how large was too heavy for him to lift. In no time he had a pile so large that it looked like a new mountain had grown up in the matter of minutes. When the net was tied tight about the boulders, the builder ordered the stallion to pull.

The horse’s muscles strained and its hooves dug into the ground as he began hauling away the monstrous pile of boulders. The sound was tremendous and all the Gods and Goddesses came to see what caused the noise. They were amazed at the sight of the stallion pulling the boulders, and they were not pleased. When the first day finally ended, a large section of the wall had been completed. Day

after day the builder and stallion continued their work. In the freezing snow or rain, in the dark of night and across the icy ground, they continued their daily labor. Nothing seemed to stop them, or even slow them down. The Gods seriously began to worry.

As Winter unfolded in all its frigid glory, the Gods would come every day to check on the progress of the builder and his stallion. They were astonished at the strength that they possessed, and how they never seem to tire. Some of the Gods were pleased and convinced themselves that no matter how hard they worked, they could never complete the task in six months. But as each day passed, more and more Gods and Goddesses began to grow concern that they were wrong. They began to suspect that the builder was a giant in disguise.

The mason and the stallion continued their work all through Winter. During the night the builder would fill the net with load after load of boulders for his horse to bring to the building site. Then, during the day he would resume the construction of the wall. As Winter grew shorter, the days grew longer. The wall was now long and rapidly taking shape. Eventually, it snaked around the entire border of Asgard, almost encasing it.

There were now only three days left before Summer arrived, and the builder had almost completed his task. The wall was huge, sturdy and powerfully strong. The Gods were sure that it was formidable enough to prevent all enemies of Asgard from penetrating the realm of the Gods. Only the great gateway was still unfinished. All the Gods and Goddesses had come to see how far things had progressed. They examined the entire length of the wall, inspecting it to make sure that there was no section as yet uncompleted. They could find nothing to suggest that the wall would not be finished by the first day of Summer. Talk soon turned to their bargain, and fears spread that they would have to pay the price they had agreed upon.

Odin called all the Gods and Goddesses to a meeting at Gladsheim. Solemn faces, grim and despondent, filled the hall. Everyone dreaded the certain destruction that would befall them if the builder completed his task. Freyja alone, cried. Her tears flowed like a rain of golden drops that covered the entire floor.

Odin stood before his throne and raised his spear. Everyone stopped talking and turned their attention to the All-Father. "Time is running out," Odin announced. "We have but three days to find a way out of our contract. How did we come to risk losing the moon and the sun, and plunging us all into eternal darkness? Our self-awareness will be ripped from our minds and souls and we will be helpless before the chaos that will descend upon the Cosmos. Who was it that convinced us to agree to a bargain that will result in the loss of our regenerative

powers, through the marriage of Freyja to this brute of a giant? Odin's one eye stared down into the vast hall until it rested upon the cause of their dilemma—Loki. All heads now turned until they faced the mischief-monger of the Aesir. Odin marched from his High Seat to where Loki was standing, in the back of the hall. The disgrace-of-Gods-and-men cringed in fear as he watched Odin approach. The Master of Lies licked his lips and clutched his breast as he stepped back. When Odin reached Loki, he grabbed the Trickster by the neck and held him firm.

"Please, Odin," Loki begged as he grabbed Odin by his wrist. "How was I to know that he could complete the task in only six months?"

Odin tightened his grip around Loki's neck. The fire-imp winced from the pain.

"We all agreed," Loki struggled to speak.

"But it was you who convinced us to accept his proposal," Odin said. "It was you who suggested he be permitted the use of his horse. You got us into this trouble, and you must get us out of it."

Everyone in the hall agreed with Odin.

"Use that conniving mind of yours to come up with some way to free us from the contract that we made with this giant," Odin demanded. "Either the builder forfeits his payments or you forfeit your life." Loki could feel Odin's fingers slowly digging further into his neck. He could not speak, but Odin loosened his grip and let the Shape Changer drop to the floor.

Loki took deep breaths as he tried to recover. He looked up and saw the anger that burned in Odin's eye. "I swear that I will," he finally said. "I swear that I will find a way out of the bargain, no matter what it might cause me."

As the mason led his stallion to the quarry for another load of boulders, he was confident that he would easily complete the construction of the wall before the first day of Summer. The Gods and Goddesses would have to keep their part of the bargain and deliver the moon, the sun and especially Freyja to him. The thought of the disaster that this would bring down on the Gods delighted him. He began singing a tune, sending the birds and animals to take flight in the thickets and woods. The only living thing that didn't flee was a young mare. From out of the woods she dashed to the top of a nearby hill. From its heights the mare watched as the builder secured the net filled with boulders and then ordered his stallion to pull. The sweat glistened on the stallion's straining muscles.

After the mare watched for a while, she leaped up onto her rear legs and whinnied. She then raced down to the hill toward the stallion and began dancing



around Svadilfari in the moonlight, her flanks flaring and her heels kicking invitingly.

The stallion sniffed the air and could smell the mare's readiness for mating. He stopped pulling and broke free from his rains, galloping after the mare, who led him into the woods. The builder ran after his stallion, screaming and cursing at the horse, but the stallion was too fast. All night the mason tried to catch up to his stallion, but it was useless. He could not find his stallion. Svadilfari had disappeared with the mare.

No stone was hauled to the construction site that night. What little work the mason was able to accomplish the next day was not nearly enough to ensure that he completed the wall before the timed agreed upon. He had fallen too far behind schedule. He threw his tools on the ground and began cursing and stumping. His anger soon overcame him, and lost control of himself. His disguise soon fell away and he returned to his true form. The Gods and Goddesses heard the commotion and came to investigate. They watched as the dwarfish builder was transformed into a huge brute of a stone giant. Because the builder had been dishonest about whom he was, and his true intent, the Gods immediately evoked their oaths. They no longer had to ensure his safe conduct out of Asgard.

The giant turned and addressed the Gods and Goddesses. "You have tricked me!" the stone giant shouted. "You have cheated me! But if you think your trickery has won the day, you are all wrong! You might have won, but at the price of losing your honorable souls! You are no longer untainted, and have become a pack of thieves and whores!"

Realizing that they had been tricked by the giant, Odin called on Thor to pay the giant for his deeds, but it was not the moon, the sun and Freyja that were surrendered to him. Thor flung his hammer at the giant and it crushed his skull, shattering his head into a million pieces. The Gods then seized the giant's body and flung it into the lowest regions of Niflheim.

It was only after many months had passed that Loki reappeared in Asgard. When he finally returned, he was leading a small, grey colt behind him. This horse was most unusual because it had eight legs. Loki presented it to Odin and told him his name was Sleipnir.

"Here," Loki said to Odin. "Take him. I give him to you. I don't want him, for every time I look at him, I'm reminded of the night that I turned myself into a mare and mated with the stallion, Svadilfari."

Odin was pleased with the gift and took great care of the little eight-legged colt. He soon grew into a powerful horse and loved Odin deeply. He proved to be the fastest steed in all the nine worlds, faster even than Golden, Joyous, Silver-

maned, Sinewy, Gleaming, Gold Mane, Light Foot, Hollow-hoofed, Shining and Swift. It was because of Loki's gift that Odin welcomed the Trickster make into Asgard. But Odin immediately had second thoughts and wondered if he would one day live to regret his generosity.

## **XVI: THE MEANING OF THE BUILDING OF ASGARD'S WALL:**

The meaning of the story is clear—if you are willing to surrender of little of your honor in an attempt to secure security, you will lose a part of your soul. The Gods were convinced to try and trick the giant into building the wall by Loki. They had no intention of paying him. When Heimdall bared his golden teeth twice to the builder, when he first arrived in Asgard, he was displaying the purity of the Gods. This purity is embodied in their honor and integrity. These qualities are the strongest weapons the Gods possess into their continuous struggle with the giants. But the Gods are tricked by Loki into attempting to cheat the builder, thus tarnishing that purity.

The giant, disguised as the mason, demanded the sun and the moon. Both these heavenly bodies represent the illumination of the soul and the mind. If they are lost, then all is plunged into darkness. This darkness is the darkness of the mind and soul. It is the lost of one's sense of self-worth, one's pride in his past and his heritage. All that is important, for one to be true to oneself, is ripped from them and they become rootless, and condemned to wander in darkness. This also leads to the lost of one's regenerative powers. That is why the mason-giant demanded Freyja as his bride. She is the essence of fertility, reproduction and true love and sexuality. Her lost, is the lost of these qualities. And it would spell doom for the Gods, and for mankind, for we are their children.

Loki is the mastermind of this plan. He invited the builder to Asgard and tricks the Gods into accepting his offer. Loki tries to trick the Gods into surrendering their self-awareness and their manhood and sexuality, to the chaos of the giants, all in the name of temporary security. It is no surprise that Loki eventually reveals his own bisexuality, when he tricks the stallion into abandoning his master. It marks him as the harbinger of moral decay and social depravation.

Because this tale takes place early in the lives of the Gods, right after the fall of the Golden Age, Loki's powers for mischief are still weak, and the Gods are still strong enough to foil his plans. But because the Gods do accept Loki's trickery, as a means of saving themselves, they have taken the first step along the path that will eventually lead to Ragnarok.

# 4

## *ODIN: THE ALL-FATHER*

### **I: ODIN, THE ALL-FATHER:**

Odin was the All-Father before he became Odin. He is the creator of the Cosmos, and the nine worlds. He was reborn into the Holy Trinity of Odin, Vili and Ve, and thus became one with his creation. This trinity was the creative force that gave shape to the universe, creating order out of chaos. Thus, Odin is the force that holds the universe together and sets it on its path. He is the evolutionary momentum from which all things originated, and progression that sets the season on their cycles. He is the giver of life and death, because both are necessary for the evolutionary to continue. From his consciousness all the Gods were born. Every God and Goddess is a part of the All-Father, just as we all are a part of him. He gave life to our people and to all things. He is the source of divine consciousness and gave us self-awareness that distinguishes from the animals. He gave us the will to grow and strive to make ourselves better, so that we might be more like him. He does not want worshipers on bended knees, but men and women standing upright celebrating his name and all the names of the Gods and Goddesses. Through him we look inward so that we might seek to deify the self. The All-Father is the unity of the many aspects of the pantheon of Gods and Goddesses.

Odin is the All-Father, the Great God. He is unseen, but can be felt, especially in the natural surroundings of the forest. If you want to feel the presence of Odin, withdraw into the forest and wait there. Remain still and listen. You will feel his presence in the thousands of mysterious sounds and breaths of the forest. The wind that blows through the leaves and branches of the trees is the very essence of his spirit, and when the storm-winds blew through the forest you can feel him on his wind hunt. But most of all, you'll feel his essence in the strange and awful stillness that dwells in the forest, broken only by its occasional sounds. Odin's presence is especially felt in the sacred groves within the forest. Through meditation and chanting, this essence of Odin that can more easily be felt within the

forest, can be evoked in any place, but it will take a great deal of effort and work over a long period of time.

## II: THE FATHER OF GODS AND MEN:

Odin is the best known of all the Gods. His name has been spelled in many ways: Odin, Odinn, Odhinn, Wotan, Wodinn, Woden and Wodanaz. It means “The Furious One.” His is the personification of the Life-Force that penetrates mind and body. Many referred to him as the great wizard, who is the master of Scald craft or galdor magic. He is the howling wind and thunderous storm, and his touch can fill a warrior with the spirit of the Berserker force. He is the highest and holiest of all the Gods. He is the personification of the all-pervading spirit of the universe and the Life-Force of the cosmos. His element is the air and he is the holder of all wisdom, conveying it to those of the other worlds. Odin is the All-Father, and from him all other Gods are descended from. He is the eldest of the Gods and has reincarnated himself into the form of Odin, and latter as Balder.

Odin is all-seeing and watches everything that happens in all nine worlds from his High Seat, Hlidskialf, located in his hall known as Valaskialf. This seat was both throne and watchtower. Only Odin is privileged in this High Seat. Not even his wife, Frigga is permitted this privilege. In another of Odin’s halls known as Gladsheim, there are twelve seats for the other Gods. Here Odin would hold council with the Gods.

Odin possesses the Mead of Wisdom which he won in a contest, and dispenses it to humans he favors, so they might speak and write in celebration of his deeds, and the deeds of the Gods in song and verse.

Odin is the God of Battle, and shows special favor toward kings and other rulers. He is the leader of the Wild Hunt, and is feared as well as respected. While on the hunt he collects souls. Farmers would leave their last sheaf out as an offering for Odin, and his horde of ghosts, to make their fields fruitful and not snatch away their souls.

He is the father of our race, as well as the betrayer of chosen heroes. He sits upon the High Seat, Hlidskjalf, located in Asgard. From here he can witness all that happens in the nine worlds. It is his throne and from it he rules the universe.

## III: ODIN’S APPEARANCE:

Odin often takes human form and travels the world as a wanderer. On these occasions he wears a wide-brim hat and carries a staff. He drapes himself in a dark

blue-black cloak, representative of the darkening sky. His blue-black cloak represents the vile of death and is often referred to as Hel-blue in color. It also represents the night sky and the depths of his wisdom and knowledge of all things. In this guise he involves himself in the affairs of mankind. He is often thought of as Merlin in the King Arthur stories. (Merlin = Odin, Arthur = Balder, Percival = Balder reincarnated)

Odin sometimes appears as a young man in his prime, with a long dark beard, grim appearance, tall and wearing a gray suit and dark cloak. At other times he might appear as an older man with a gray beard and hair. In either form he is always a powerful and vigorous man. Sometimes he's shown wearing battle gear, and wearing a golden helmet with an eagle on it. Odin has no weapons except one. In his hand he holds his infallible spear, Gungnir (The Shaking One), which was so sacred that an oath sworn upon it could never be broken. The spear is also used for hollowing and is a symbol of his powers and a lawgiver. Unlike Thor's hammer which is used as a blessing hollow, Odin's spear is used to hollow death. On his arm he wore a marvelous gold ring known as Draupnir, which reproduced itself, ninefold every ninth day. Odin is accompanied by two ravens, Huginn (Thought) and Muninn (Memory). They were sent out and flew about the nine worlds every day, and returning every night to whisper into Odin's ear everything they saw and heard. It is considered a good omen for a traveler to spy two ravens. It means Odin is watching over them. At Odin's feet sat two wolves, Freki (Ravenous) and Geri (Greed). These wolves are sacred to Odin. He always fed his wolves with his own hands. Odin is also known as the one-eyed. He sacrificed his eye so that he could drink from Mimir's Well, the well of the Wyrð, and acquire its wisdom.

When Odin sat on his throne, his feet rested upon a footstool made of gold. All his furniture and utensils are also made of either gold or silver.

The reason why his nature is so grim is, he knows that in the end the Gods will die in the last battle with evil. His entire existence is a quest against that which he cannot change. He collects the souls of heroes who have either fallen in battle or lived a courageous life, and gathers them all in the great hall in Asgard, Valhalla. These are the Einherjar, and they will ride out of Asgard with him, into battle at the end of time. Odin knows that he cannot change the fate that the Norns have wove, but he is also the cheater of death. Through his beloved son, Balder the Beautiful, he has found a formula to cheat death and ensure his resurrection after Ragnarok.

## IV: THE GRIM GOD OF EVOLUTION AND PROGRESSION:

One should guard against becoming too familiar with Odin. He is not a God that can always be reliable upon to those who call on him for aid. He is not a God of order and peace. He likes to stir up strife among the nations of man, and is known to betray his heroes. He doesn't do this because he is evil or is without honor. Odin is always seeking great heroes to fill the ranks of his Einherjar. If he sees a courageous hero in battle, even one who he has promised victory, he might decide to change his mind if he deems him worthy to join the ranks of his Einherjar. This is why Odin is a God of war, and why he will stir up wars. He does it as a means of selecting the bravest for his legions. He is not a God of social order, and of all the Gods he is the most likely to walk among us involving himself in the affairs of mortals.

Odin is the instrument of evolution. He fosters conflicts to weed out the weak and permit the strongest to become our natural leaders. He does not love death and strife, but rather he represents the natural forces that are behind the evolutionary development of the species. Struggle is necessary for all development and advancement. The wheels of progress are often greased with the blood of millions of those fallen in conflict. And in this ever-spiraling process of conflict, strife and wars, he is always collecting the most heroic, courageous and strongest to follow him into the last great battle, Ragnarok, so that a new world will be born out of the ashes of the old.

His banner is the raven's banner. It is the battle flag—a black flag with a white skull and a red raven.

Odin is the God of death, but he is also the God of evolution. He is the fatalism that is part of life. We will all die someday. And on that day we will find Odin waiting for us, just as death waits of us all. But for progression to function, the old must die and give way to the rise of the new.

Odin, himself, has sacrificed even himself to himself. He hung for nine days and nights on the world tree, so that he might receive the secret knowledge of the runes. His deed is representative of the eternal truth that all progression requires sacrifice. Nothing comes easy to us in life. We must sacrifice to succeed in whatever it is we try and accomplish.

It is said that Odin lives on wine alone. This is not to be taken literally. He also drinks the ale and mead of wisdom and poetry. Odin is the drinker of wisdom and knowledge. He drinks from the well of Mimir so he might acquire the knowledge of all things.

Odin is a teacher and put the knowledge of the runes in his holy mead, and distributes it to anyone who seeks his knowledge. He feeds wisdom to all living creatures. He is the one who makes the Gods wise, and does the same for man. When we study the Folk Faith, we find that we are drawn to Odin. This is because he is the Life-Force of the universe. Any seeker of knowledge is going to find that all paths of higher learning lead to Odin.

Odin is associated with the Roman God, Mercury, because he wandered about the world like Mercury. His travels also made him, like Mercury, the God of commerce and trade. Odin was known as the first God of the dead, but he was never associated with Pluto or Hades. Pluto and Hades were Gods of the underworld. They sat in judgement of the dead and determined their life after death. This was the duty of Hel in the Norse pantheon. Odin's association with the dead was as the chooser of the dead. Odin leads souls from world to world and brings the bravest and noblest to live with him in Valhalla. He also conveys the wisdom of the dead to the living.

## **V: ODIN THE SHAMAN:**

The shaman offers himself as a link between the material world and other worlds that exist on other planes of existence. He acts as a conduit between Midgard and Asgard in the Folk Faith. He holds a position similar to a priest, but there are differences. The Shaman is someone who has the ability to enter a trance-like state. In this state he is able to journey in spirit to the other nine worlds, rising to Asgard or descending Niflheim. He may possess the power to visit the Gods, see into the future, speak with the dead, see into the past, and can even rescue a lost soul. He may be someone who seeks wisdom or answer questions about someone's destiny. A shaman can be someone of either sex, though men tend to practice galdor magic, while women are drawn to seither magic. But, the exceptional shaman will be skilled in both practices.

Among the Gods there are two who have exceptional abilities as shaman. One is Odin, who sacrificed himself to himself by hanging on the World Tree for nine days and nights, and pierced himself in the side with his spear. Through this ritual sacrifice he learned the secret of the runes. The ceremony of initiation usually involves a symbolic death to gain knowledge. Odin learned the secrets of galdor magic, which is the power to transform the environment we live in according to our will. It is the ability to turn our power outward, to affect the world around us, reshaping it to conform to our way of living. The purpose of galdor is to make the objective world conform to our intellectual perception. Thus, Odin *is* the

power to transform the world we live in. The other God, or Goddess with exceptional ability in magic is Freyja. She was a Vanir who arrived in Asgard to teach Odin the secrets of seider magic, while Odin taught her about galdor magic.

I know I hung  
on the windswept tree,  
through nine days and night.  
I was stuck with a spear  
and given to Odin,  
myself given to myself.

Odin is known as the God of the dead, but he is not the ruler of the Netherworld. He is not associated with Pluto or Hades. Instead, Odin is the gatherer of the dead. He rides his eight-legged steed, Sleipnir, across the landscape hunting for the souls of great men. This is called the Wild Hunt, and is typical of the shaman. The shaman often rides an animal through the spirit world. Odin rode Sleipnir to Hel to see the knowledge of a dead seeress. He also lent his steed to Hermond to seek out Balder in Hel, and ask Hel to release Balder and his wife for Odin and Frigga. Odin's daughters, the Valkyries, led by Freyja, perform the task in Odin names, to carry off the spirits of fallen heroes. They are taken to Asgard where they are divided between Freyja and Odin.

Odin is the All-Father who is reborn in the form of Odin, or the Holy Trinity of Odin, Vili and Ve. Odin also dies in Ragnarok, but is reborn afterwards in the form of the resurrected Balder. This is typical of the Shamanistic practice dying and being reborn. Odin's sacrifice was voluntary. He did it to acquire secret knowledge. This hidden knowledge was revealed to him and transformed him. He learned the secret of the runes. Christians try to claim that Odin's hanging from the tree, with the spear piercing his side, was borrowed from the story of Christ. The truth is that the Christians borrowed it from the old faiths of pagan Europe. The tale of Odin's sacrifice is very different from Christ's death. Odin isn't sharing the suffering of the world, or saving men from sin and damnation. Odin's sacrifice is for his own transformation, and a lesson for us to learn how to transform ourselves so we to, can acquire hidden knowledge.

Odin the shaman is also the shape-changer. The shaman not only rides an animal to other worlds, but often transforms himself into an animal. Odin also took the form of different animals. He transformed himself into an eagle, a serpent, a fish. He also has two ravens that act as his mind traveling the universe. Munnin is the power of reflective thought while Huginn is the power of the intellectual or cognitive ability. These birds are symbolic of the shaman as a seer.



Odin also performed another form of self-sacrifice by surrendering his left eye so he might take a drink from Mimir's well. This act bestows upon him knowledge and wisdom.

## **VI: VALHALLA AND THE EINHERJAR:**

In Asgard, Odin has many great halls. One of them is especially well known. It is Valhalla (the Hall of the Chosen Slain). It is to this hall that Odin brings the great heroes whom his daughters, the Valkyries have brought to him. They are known as the Einherjar. The hall is vast and has 540 gates and 800 warriors walking abreast can pass through each gateway. But over the main entrance, which is called Valgrind, there resides a wolf and over it there is the head of a boar and on it perched a huge eagle, whose eyes can see to the far regions of the nine worlds. This is the main entrance of Valhalla, in which newly arrived heroes must pass. No one, not worthy can pass by the three guardians of the great hall. The walls of Valhalla are constructed from battle shields. So highly polished are the shields that the radiance from them fills the entire hall with light. The roof is made from spears and everywhere inside armor is used to decorate the hall.

One section of the hall is filled with long benches and tables where the heroes feast and drink, and exchange tales of heroism. They are led into the hall by the Valkyries and over the entire feast, resides Odin. The daughters of Odin discarded their armor and clad in white robes, serve the heroes with all the boar meat they can eat and all the ale, beer and mead they can drink. The meat is cut from the boar, Saehrimir, who is cooked every day by the cook, Audhrimnir and provides enough meat to feed the countless heroes of Valhalla. Every morning, the boar is made whole and renewed so that it can be butchered and cook once more. Drink is poured from the udders of the goat, Heithrun, which stands on the roof of the hall and eats the leaves from the World tree. In this hall, Odin only drinks wine and feeds his wolves, Geri and Freki from his portion of the food. And everywhere are the wives, lovers of the heroes and white-armed virgins who have come to join them in Valhalla after death, provided entertainment and lovemaking.

This hall is known as a warrior's paradise. In another section of Valhalla there is a great field where the Einherjar enters during the day. They are fully dressed for battle and spent the days fighting each other in heroic fight. But at the end of the day a great horn was blown, and the dead upon Valhalla's field return to life and joins their comrades in the feasting that takes place during the nights. No grudges were held among the Einherjar and comradeship filled the hearts of all who

inhabited Valhalla. Warfare is deemed the most honorable of occupations by the Gods, and courage and bravery are the greatest virtues by Odin. The old Norse believed that anyone who died in battle would be fetched by the Valkyries and brought to Asgard. There, Freyja and Odin would divide the heroes among them. Those chosen by Odin were welcomed by his sons, Bragi and Hermond, where their great deeds were immortalized in song and verse. When someone of great fame was brought into the hall, Odin, also known as the Valfather (Father of the Slain) would rise and welcome him personally into the ranks of the Einherjar.

## **VII: SLEIPNER:**

After Loki transformed himself into a mare to distract Svadilfari, the giant mason's stallion, from assisting him in building the wall around Asgard, Loki gave birth to a cloud-gray colt. This colt was unusual because it had eight legs. Loki presented it to Odin as a gift to win his permission to remain in Asgard. The colt quickly grew to full size and a bond developed between the All-Father and Sleipner. No one but Odin, with the exception of Hermod, was permitted to ride Sleipner.

Sleipner is akin to the totem animal that the shaman rides to other worlds. On his teeth are inscribed the sacred runes. Odin rode the horse to other worlds, especially to Niflheim, the realm of the dead. The Milky Way is the special highway across the Cosmos that Odin ride Sleipner across. Sleipner is the fastest of all animals, and rides like the storm winds. Across the rainbow bridge Odin rides his eight-legged steed to the Thingstead, where the Gods gather in council.

What has two heads, ten legs, three eyes and one tail? The answer to this riddle is Odin riding his steed, Sleipner. Odin has one eye, Sleipner has two. Odin has two legs and Sleipner has eight legs. Each has one head and Sleipner has one tail. It is on the back of Sleipner that Odin rides to battle during Ragnarok. Odin not only rides Sleipner to war, but when he goes on his wild hunt.

## **VIII: THE WILD HUNT:**

Odin is also the God of the winds and storms. He rules over all things associated with the sky. He rides through the air on Sleipner as the old riddle describes: "Who are two who ride to the Thing? Three eyes have they together, ten feet, and one tail!: and thus they travel through the lands." On stormy winter nights one can hear the call of Odin, riding across the world. He seeks the souls of the newly

dead, collecting and leading them to the Netherworld. He is the King of all the disembodied souls, and this makes him the God of the Death, but not the God of Dead, for he does not rule over the dead. That is the charge Hel.

For centuries he was known as the Wild Huntsman. When you hear the rush and roar of the wind on the stormy night, you should know that it is Odin on the hunt. Behind rides his train of huntsmen, riding hard behind him. Sometimes Uller rides with him, other times Hermod accompanies Odin. There are times when Freyja might join the hunt, leading Odin's daughters, the Valkyries. And along side Sleipner runs Odin wolves, howling and baying at the moon. Some people call the Wild Hunt by other names: Woden's Hunt, the Raging Host, Gabriel's Hounds, or Asgardreia. When we feel the cold wind of death passing us by, it is Odin riding on Sleipner on his quest for the dead. If he passes you by, then it is not your time. Make the sign of the Hammer and count yourself fortunate, but under no circumstances make mockery of the hunt, or your soul just might be snatched up and whirled away. To witness the hunt is not to be feared either, if one does witness the hunt and wished the hunter well on his quest, he will be rewarded with riches and good fortune.

Even after the introduction of Christianity to Europe, the belief of Odin riding through the world on his Wild Hunt did not die. He led the ghostly army during the Twelve Nights of Christmas. The object of the Wild Hunt wasn't always the souls of the newly dead. Sometimes the phantom hunters sought a visionary boar or wild horse. White-breasted maidens were claimed to have been captured and borne away. People often left food and drink in the fields as offerings to the Wild Huntsman.

Christianity incorporated the Wild Hunt into its own folklore. Long after the name of Odin was forgotten in Europe, the leader of the Wild Hunt was claimed to be Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa, or even King Arthur. The Wild Hunt was also occasionally contributed to sinner likes the Squire of Rodenstein or Hans von Hackelberg, who were condemned as punishment for their sin to hunt through the sky for eternity. It was known by different names in different parts of Europe. In Germany it was called the Raging Host, in England it was called Herlathing, from the mythical king Herla who was suppose to lead the hunt. In Northern France it was called Mesnee d' Hellequin, from Hel, the Goddess of the Netherworld. In Central France the Wild Huntsman was known as the Great Huntsman of Fontainebleau. The French people claimed that the Wild Huntsman was heard on the eve of Henry IV's murder, and was heard once more before the outbreak of the French Revolution. During the Middle Ages, the Wild Hunt was attributed to the Biblical figure of Cain, as his punishment for killing his

brother, and was known as Cain's Hunt. The same was said about Herod, who tried to kill the infant Christ and was called Herod's Hunt. These are other examples of the Gods of the old faith living on within a Christianized model.

## IX: ODIN'S QUEST FOR WISDOM:

The pillar of the Cosmos was the great Yggdrasill. Its branches stretched out in all direction, sheltering the nine worlds and all those who lived within them. Three mighty roots it possessed. One of the roots reached down into the Niflheim. In the netherworld its root grew out of the spring known as Hvirgelmir. This well boiled and seethed causing decay and death. Nearby the spring, the dragon Nidhogg lived where he spent most of his time satisfying his insatiable appetite by feasting on the corpses of the Netherworld. Between gulps he sent the squirrel Ratatosk up the trunk of the tree to exchange insults with the eagle that sat perched on the loftiest of branches. When not devouring the dead, Nidhogg would gnaw on the root of Yggdrasill, trying to unloosen that which was eternal and firm.

The second of Yggdrasill's roots grew out of the well of Urd located in Asgard. This was the spring of destiny. The Gods and Goddesses would gather at the well each day and hold court, passing out justice upon all living things. Its waters bestowed strength, life and growth, renewing the World Tree's strength and preserving its power to hold together the universe. Here too, the Norns resided, Urd (Fate), Skuld (Being) and Verdandi (Necessity). They were the three most powerful of the Norns and they wove the destiny of all things, shaping each man's life, and sprinkle its waters upon the branches of the World Tree.

The third root grew out of the land of the giants, Jotunheim. It sprang out of the well guarded by the wise Mimir. This is the Well of Wisdom, and its waters bestow great wisdom on anyone who drinks its waters. One day, Odin arrived at the well in the morning of time. He met with the giant, Mimir (Memory) and asked for the right to take a drink of his well. He knew it was the fountain of wit and wisdom and would bestow knowledge of all things, past, present and future. Mimir agreed to let Odin take a draught, but he demanded a price for the privilege. Odin would have to give one of his eyes in exchange for the drink.

Odin did not hesitate and gladly plucked out one of his eyes, which Mimir placed deep in the well. There it shone and provided Odin with a source of continuous insight. The Terrible One gained immense knowledge, but it also left him with a thirst for further wisdom that could never be quenched. Odin never regretted his deal but though he was now all-wise, he now suffered from a great

sadness, for he had gained the knowledge of the future and learned that all things are transitory—even the Gods. Knowing of the doom that awaited all things caused Odin to ever after wear of grim expression on his face.

Odin could not stop wondering if he could find the means to cheat the death that awaited him and all the Gods. He wanted to find the means to ensure that he would survive the doom that awaited him. Odin stood before the World Tree and stared at it long and hard. Cutting a branch from the tree he fashioned a great spear for himself. Raising himself high he hung himself on Yggdrasil for nine long days and nights—“A sacrifice of myself to myself.”

Odin knew that wisdom could only be obtain through sacrifice, so he grabbed his spear and plunged it into himself. While he hung from the tree, and impaled upon his spear, he stared into the eternal depths of the immeasurable vastness of the universe.

“I know that I hung  
 On a wind-rocked tree  
 Nine whole nights,  
 With a spear wounded,  
 And to Odin offered  
 Myself to myself;  
 On that tree  
 Of which no one knows  
 From what root it springs.”  
 (ODIN’S RUNE-SONG)

All the knowledge of the universe flowed into his mind. Finally he called out in pain. “I am the All-Father and to me all knowledge has been bestowed upon me. No drink or bread or any form of nourishment is given to me. The secret of the roots of the great tree has ben revealed to me as I peered into the hidden ethers of the Cosmos. I seized the knowledge and gave it order, fashion it into runes.

“I formed a rune that can give great wealth to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Fehu.

“I formed a second rune that will bestow eternal strength and virility to anyone who is willing to learn it secrets. I named it Uruz.

“I formed a third rune that will bestow power and protection from the evils that dwell in the world to anyone who is willing to learn it secrets. I named it Thurisaz.

“I formed a fourth rune that will bestow wisdom and divine inspiration to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Ansuz.

“I formed a fifth rune that will bestow order and continuity to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Raido.

“I formed a sixth rune that will bestow illumination to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Kenaz.

“I formed a seventh rune that will bestow generosity, hospitality and love in marriage to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Gebo.

“I formed an eighth rune that will bestow joy and happiness to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Wunjo.

“I formed a ninth rune that will bestow harmony and hope to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Hagalaz.

“I formed a tenth rune that will bestow power to survive through the worst privations to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Nauthiz.

“I formed an eleventh rune that will bestow strength of character to remain calm in times of stress to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Isa.

“I formed a twelfth rune that will bestow self-confidence, self-control and patience to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Jera.

“I formed a thirteenth rune that will bestow the ability to harness the power of life and death to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Eihwaz.

“I formed a fourteenth rune that will bestow the power to change and grow to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Pertho.

“I formed a fifteenth rune that will bestow the secrets of the Life-Force, purity and protection to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Elhaz.

“I formed a sixteenth rune that will bestow victory and success to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Sowilo.

“I formed a seventeenth rune that will bestow honor, loyalty and the ability to dispense justice to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Tiwaz.

“I formed an eighteenth rune that will bestow fertility to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Berkano.

“I formed a nineteenth rune that will bestow happiness in marriage and family matters to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Ehwaz.

“I formed a twentieth rune that will bestow intelligence and logic to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Mannaz.

“I formed a twenty-first rune that will bestow intuition and a sixth sense to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Laguz.

“I formed a twenty-second rune that will bestow masculinity and virility to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it Ingwaz.

“I formed a twenty-third rune that will bestow divine inspiration and superior genius to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it *Dagaz*.

“I formed a twenty-fourth rune that will bestow the riches of heritage, home and land to anyone who is willing to learn its secrets. I named it *Othala*.

“With these charms I know the hidden knowledge of the Cosmos!”

Odin cries out his last words and dies, but he rises again from death.

After Odin has fully developed the runes, he cuts himself down and begins carving the magic runes into the spears that he impaled himself with, *Gungnir*, and upon the teeth of his horse, *Sleipnir*. He then began traveling through the nine worlds, inscribing the runes into all things so that anyone who seeks the path of an Odinic shaman could discover the secret of the magic runes in the world that surrounds them. Odin also learns nine magic songs from the brother of his material grandfather, *Bolthor*.

Odin makes the supreme sacrifice for knowledge. His death represents the passing of the old self and rebirth as a new man who possesses occult wisdom. When Odin surrenders his eye for a drink from *Mimir's Well*, he is undergoing a shamanistic ritual. Plucking his eye out is the same as giving up oneself for hidden knowledge. The same is true when Odin hangs from the *World Tree* and impales himself with his spear. In ancient times it was custom for a man to assist and teach his sister's sons as a kind of Godfather. At *Mimir's Well* reside the three *Norns*. They are the Norse counterparts to the Greek and Roman *Three Fates* or *Parcae*: *Clotho* (who held the distaff), *Lachesis* (spinner of the thread of life), and *Atropos* (who snipped the thread to end a life).

There is a parallel in this story between Odin and Christ. Again! This story is not influenced by Christianity, but the other way around. It was Christianity that was influenced by the old faiths of Europe and the Middle East. Let's explore the similarities between Odin's death on the tree and Christ's death on the cross. Their deaths were both voluntarily. Odin and Christ are both pierced by a spear. In both cases the spear develops magic qualities. (*The Spear of Longinus*). Odin says he receives no food or nourishing drink, while Christ is given vinegar. Both Odin and Christ call out before they die. But again, Odin's death and sacrifice have very ancient roots in the old faiths and were invented by Christianity. If anything, it was the story of Christ's crucifixion that was influenced by the old faiths.

## X: A CONTEST WITH VAFTHRUDNIR:

Odin paced up and down his hall, Valaskjalf, unable to rest. Frigga watched her husband and knew that when he was in this way the wanderlust had overtaken him. Finally Odin stood and shouted, "I can stand it no longer, I need to travel!"

"If you must leave once more," Frigga said, "then there is nothing anyone can do to stop you."

"I would go to Jotunheim and visit Vafthrudnir in his great hall," Odin said.

"I would rather the greatest wanderer remain here with me," Frigga said. "As I understand it, Vafthrudnir is the wisest and most powerful of the giants."

"That's why I need to visit him," Odin said. "I've traveled across the nine worlds and learned all that the Gods know. I know the future, which is the wisdom of the Gods, but I need to test my knowledge against Vafthrudnir, the riddle-master. Since the giants know all there is to know of the past, I wish to see if my knowledge of the past is as great as his."

"Vafthrudnir is truly the wisest of the giants, but the giants are our enemies," Frigga said. "I fear that his wisdom might be a trap to trick you into going to Jotunheim."

"All the more reason for me to go and visit him," Odin said. "As the All-Father, I cannot remain here in Asgard. I must go and I will."

"Then go in safe passage, father of the Gods and men," Frigga said anxiously. "In both your journey to giant-land and on your return, may no harm befall you. And may your mind be sharp and your wisdom unailing when you do word-battle with Vafthrudnir."

"Odin wrapped himself in his long blue cloak and put on his broad-brimmed hat. Taking his staff in hand, he set out from Asgard, passing across the shining rainbow bridge. Far Odin wandered, across endless plains and fields, and crossing steaming fissions, over rushing rivers and into the mountainous regions of Jotunheim, he trekked. The air soon turned cold and the skies grey. Snow covered the lands and mountains loomed up in all directions. Winds now blew hard against the Terrible One. Odin pulled his hat down over his face so that no one could see that he had only one eye, as he entered a deep valley surrounded by ice-covered mountains on three sides. At the far end of the valley soared the hall of Im's father, Vafthrudnir. With his staff in hand, Odin entered the hall.

Once inside Odin called out. "Greetings, Vafthrudnir! I've travel a great distance to meet you. Your reputation as the most wise is known in all nine worlds. Is it true that there is none whose wisdom is greater than your's?"



Vafthrudnir appeared, huge and gigantic. “Who are you?” He demanded. “What is your name? If you come to my hall to try and best me, then you will not leave alive if you do not prove your greater wisdom.”

“My name is Gagnrad, and I have traveled a great distance to meet you,” Odin said. “In my land I am counted among the wisest. When I heard of your great wisdom, I decided to journey to your magnificent hall and compete with you in a contest of the knowledge of all things, past and future. I’m thirsty and hungry, and I seek shelter in your hall.”

“Then do not stand in the doorway,” said Vafthrudnir. “Come in and be seated. I will make you welcome, so make yourself at home. After you are refreshed, we will test our knowledge, but the one who fails the test will lose his head. I should warn you, not even Odin himself knows more than I. Do you agree to my terms?”

“I agree,” Odin said. Then Vafthrudnir brought food and drink for Odin to quench his thirst and hunger.

After Odin had his fill, Vafthrudnir called to him. “All right, Gagnrad, you have refreshed yourself, now it’s time to begin the contest.”

“Ask your first question,” Odin said.

“Every morning Day is pulled across the world by a great stallion. What is his name?”

“The stallion’s name is Skinfaxi,” Odin said. “He has a fiery mane and he brings the shining Day to men and Gods alike. Many men consider him the fairest of all horses.”

“That is correct, Gagnrad,” Vafthrudnir said, “now answer me this next question. Give me the name of the stallion that follows on the heels of Skinfaxi, and draws Night after Day has passed.”

“The name of the dark and beautiful stallion that draws Night is Hrimfaxi,” Odin said. “Foam falls from his mouths as he rides across the sky, and men call this foam the dew.”

“Can you give me the name of the great river that divides the world of the Gods from the world of the giants?” asked Vafthrudnir.

“The mighty river is called Iving,” Odin said. “It has never frozen, and will flow unhindered until the end of time.”

“If you can answer me this, then tell me the name of the plains where Surtur and the Gods will fight?” Vafthrudnir asked.

“When Ragnarok comes, Surtur will do battle with the Gods on the plains known as Vigrid,” Odin said. “It’s a hundred miles long and just as wide.”

Vafthrudnir nodded his head and rubbed his chin as he examined his guest. "Your knowledge is great, Gagnrad, and you have answered all my questions. Now you may put questions to me."

Odin now leaned back in his chair and thought for a moment.

"Tell me first, oh wise Vafthrudnir, from where did the earth and the heavens come from?"

"A simple question deserves a simple answer," Vafthrudnir said. "The earth was formed from the flesh of the father of all giants, Ymir. From his bones were shaped the mountains, from his blood the oceans were created and from his skull the sky and heavens were made."

"Tell me now, Vafthrudnir, the origin of the moon and the sun?"

"The moon and the sun are the son and daughter of the giant, Mundilfari," Vafthrudnir said. "They were placed in the sky by Odin, Vili and Ve, so that men could tell the passing of time."

"If you are so wise and know all, Vafthrudnir, then tell me this: from where does Day come from, and also Night?"

"Day's father is named Delling, and Night's father goes by the name of Nor."

"And why does the moon wane with different faces?" Odin asked.

"The face of the moon changes because the Gods willed it so," Vafthrudnir said. "In this way, man can tell time."

"And where does Winter and Summer come from?" asked Odin.

"Winter's father is Vindsval, the Wind Cold, and Summer's father is the gentle Svosud."

"Now tell me who was the giant that escaped the flood caused by the death of Ymir?" asked Odin.

"His name was Bergelmir and he was born long before Ymir died," Vafthrudnir said. "He was the son of Thrudgelmir and the grandson of Aurgelmir."

"And where did Aurgelmir issue from?" Odin asked.

"Aurgelmir is another name for the father of all giants, Ymir," Vafthrudnir said. "He was born of the venom that clotted and rose from the mixing of the heat of Muspellheim, and the yeasty ice of Niflheim. This is why we giants are so fierce and powerful."

"You do know a great deal," Odin said. "Now tell me how Aurgelmir was able to conceive children if he never slept with a giantess?"

"From under the armpits of Aurgelmir, a boy and a girl grew, and from between his legs he got a giant with six heads."

"Your head seems to be filled with boundless knowledge," Odin said. "Is your first memory still within your head? If so, what is it?"

“My first memory is of Bergelmir surviving the great flood after the death of Aurgelmir,” Vafthrudnir said. “I remember him floating in a boat.”

“I see,” Odin said. “Then tell me where the winds come from, and how they cause the waves to rock?”

“The winds originate at the top of the world,” Vafthrudnir said. “There, the great eagle, Hraesvelg, the Corpse Eater, sits and flaps his wings, causing the winds to rush over the face of the world.”

“I will ask you about the Gods, now,” Odin said. “Let me ask you about the great and noble Njord. There are many temples and shrines built in his honor, yet he is not one of the Aesir. How can Njord be one of the Gods?”

“Njord is not one of the Aesir that is true,” Vafthrudnir said, “but he is one of the Gods because he is of the Vanir. The Vanir and the Aesir have united as one race of Gods.”

“Now tell me, who are the men who will ride with Odin at the end of time?”

“They are known as the Einherjar, and they have been gathered from the fallen of the greatest and bravest heroes among the Children of the Gods. They sit and feast in the great hall of Valhalla.”

“Can you tell me of the fate of the Gods?” asked Odin. “You claim that you can read the secrets of the Runes, so you must know what fates awaits them.”

“I can read the Runes, and I do know their secrets, because I have visited nine worlds, including Niflheim. The Gods will pass with Ragnarok, but will return upon the resurrection of Balder. Death and rebirth are the fixed laws of all Nature.”

“Tell me then from where will the sun return after Fenrir tears her apart?”

“Before Fenrir tears her apart, Alfrothul, the Elf Beam, will give birth to a daughter who will be even more beautiful than her mother. She will take her mother’s place in the new age, rising out of the sea. Light she will give to the world, and enlightenment she would give to the Children of the Gods.”

“Who are the three maidens who will watch over the world after it is reborn?”

“They will fly over Mogthrasir’s Hill three times, and will watch over the Children of the Gods.”

“Tell me who will rule over the world after it has been reborn?”

“After Surtur’s fires have died away and life returns, Vidar and Vali will live once more,” Vafthrudnir said. “They will rule along with Modi the Wrathful and Magni the Mighty, who will own Thor’s hammer and hold it in trust for their father. And over all will be Balder and his brother Hodur.”

Odin now looked at the giant and then spoke once more. “Tell me how the All-Father will die at Ragnarok?”

“The wolf, Fenrir, will swallow the Father of the Gods and of Men. His son, Vidar, will avenge his death by tearing Fenrir apart.”

“And what are their names of the Children of the Gods who will survive, and how will they survive the end of the world?”

“Lif and Lifthrasir are the names of the man and woman who will survive the end of the world, and they will do so because they will take shelter within the Life-Force that gave birth to them, the trunk of the World Tree itself.”

“How will they survive after the world has ended?”

“By seeking nourishment in the Hoddmimir’s Wood. This will help the Children of the Gods to survive and replenish the world in the new age to come.”

“Who then are the Children of the Gods?”

“They are the nations descended from the son of Rig, Jarl. They are destined to live on, beyond the fall of the Gods, and through them, the Gods will return.”

“I have travel far and over many lands, and to many worlds,” Odin said. “Truly you possess not just the wisdom of the giants, which is all things that have passed, but you also possess the wisdom of all things that will happen, which is the wisdom of the Gods. Therefore, you should be able to tell me what Odin whispered into the ear of his most beloved son, Balder, before he burned on the funeral pyre?”

Vafthrudnir looked hard at the traveler before him, and knew instantly that it was the Terrible One himself, the all-great Odin who sat before him asking him questions. He knew that his fate was sealed long before Odin had entered his hall. He bowed his head for the eventual sword blow that would come.

“No one knows what you spoke into the ear of your son, and such knowledge will not be revealed until your son, the Beloved Balder himself reveals the secret. I have been exchanging riddles with the world’s doom, for you are Odin—and you will always be wiser than the wisest.”

“You should know that with great wisdom comes a price,” Odin said. “As I died to learn wisdom, so you must make the sacrifice for the wisdom that you possess.”

## **XI: THE TALE OF GRIMNIR:**

Odin took great interest in his children in Midgard. He was specially fond of observing the affairs of King Hrauding and his two sons, Agnar and Geirrod. When they were ten and eight years old the two sons of Hrauding went fishing. When their boat was out at sea, a terrible storm appeared over the horizon and engulfed their boat. The winds drove their boat out to sea. They no longer could

see the shore and were lost in the hammering waves and blustering winds. Their boat finally crashed upon the shores of an island. The two boys didn't know where they were, but they were lucky to be alive.

The next morning they were found by an old couple. They were really Odin and Frigga in disguise. They warmly welcomed the boys and took them into their home. They gave them food and drink and shelter. Every morning they walked with the man and he taught them many things. Of the two lads, Odin chose Geirrod as his favorite and Frigga looked favorably upon Agnar. They remained with the old couple throughout the Winter. When Spring returned, the two sons of Hrauding set out to sea for home on a boat that the old man had built for them.

They sailed for a long time across the gentle waves of the sea until they finally spied the shores of their homeland. When the boat reached the shore, Geirrod stepped ashore first. He then turned and pushed the boat back into the sea before his brother could step off it. He remembered a spell that the old man had taught them and repeated it: "Depart to the land of the trolls and never return!" Suddenly, powerful winds rose and blew the boat with Agnar in it, out to sea. Geirrod quickly returned to the hall of his father. He found that his father had died while he and his brother were away. He told them of everything that happened to him and his brother, but then lied and said his brother was drowned at sea. Many shook their heads in disbelief, but most accepted his story. The people hailed Geirrod's return and joyfully crowned him King of the Goths. But in time Geirrod proved a cruel and tyrannical king.

One day, while the divine couple were sitting on the High Seat, Hlidskialf, they looked out upon the nine worlds. Odin looked in on the two brothers.

"See Agnar?" Odin said to Frigga. "He has married a giantess and lives in a cave. He has fathered a brew of brutes. "Now see Geirrod. See how powerful he has become? He is a king and rules a great country."

Frigg turned red and raised her head as she stared at her husband. "Agnar might have sired brutes, but Geirrod is a brute. He is not only a terrible host, but he pretends to welcome guests into his home only to enslave and torture them."

"I do not believe such slander," Odin said. "I will prove the falsity of your charges myself."

Frigg agreed to let Odin try and prove her wrong, but right after Odin left, the Mother-Goddess called her servant, Fulla, and ordered her to hurry to Midgard and deliver a message to Geirrod before Odin arrived.

Fulla warned Geirrod to beware of a sorcerer who will visit him, disguised as a wanderer. “You will know him because he will be wearing a wide-brim hat and even the fiercest dogs will fear to leap at him.”

Despite the fact that Geirrod was considered untrustworthy and possessed a violent temperament, he still could be generous to guests. He listened to Fulla’s warning and ordered his followers to detain any traveler who might appear in his hall that the dogs feared to attack. Geirrod did not have to wait long for the traveler to appear. He wore a dark blue traveling cloak and carried a staff. He called himself Grimnir, the Hooded One. But when Geirrod asked his guest to tell him about himself, Grimnir refused to say anything further. He remained silent and just looked at his host as he leaned on his staff, refusing to tell Geirrod his origin and destination. This only caused Geirrod to grow angry at his insolence. Remembering Fulla’s warning, Geirrod fought to contain his anger.

“If you will not speak, then you must have good reason not to,” Geirrod said.

But Grimnir still refused to speak.

Geirrod now lost control of his anger. “If you still refuse to answer my questions,” he said, “then perhaps I can find a way to make you speak.”

Geirrod’s threat had no effect on the traveler. He just stood before Geirrod, staring at him without speaking.

Geirrod then ordered Grimnir to be bound and hung between two fires. “You will hang there like a pig on a spit until you decide to answer my questions,” Geirrod said.

For eight days and nights Grimnir was suspended between the fires without speaking.

Geirrod had a son named Agnar. He was named after his brother and was only ten years old. Everyone at Geirrod’s court loved Agnar. He was considered mature for his years and was kind and considerate, as well as brave and courageous. But when Agnar saw Grimnir suffering, he felt the traveler’s pain. He felt his father was wrong for torturing Grimnir.

One evening he waited for everyone to get so drunk that they passed out with sleep. He gave Grimnir a drink. Grimnir was grateful for the drink. He smiled at the boy and thanked him for his kindness. Grimnir then began to speak.

“Fires that burn and smolder, I order you to fall back. For eight nights I have been suspended here and no one but this young lad has shown me kindness. For your kindness, you, Agnar, will one day become a great king of all the Goths and Burgundians.

“You have been generous to me and for your generosity, listen to what I will reveal to you the greatest gift of the Gods—knowledge.

“The Gods and elves in a hallow land. In this land the mighty Thor lives in his hall Thrudheim. The God Ull live in his hall that is named Ydalir. In Alfheim lives Frey and the many elves that he rules over. The great Hall of the Slain is called Valaskjalf built by one God, but its silver roof was constructed by many Gods. At Sokkvabekk, the sinking floor, that is lapped by the cool waters of eternity, Mighty Odin and Saga come every day to drink of the mysterious water in goblets made of gold.

“Another great hall is Gldsheim, the Hall of Gladness. And nearby is Valhalla, huge and bright as gold, it stands. Here the Terrible One resides, and he brings those he has chosen from the slain to join him in residence. Every morning the inhabitants of Valhalla ride out into the great courtyard to battle each other. They continue to fight until all are dead, only to rise once more at the dusk and ride back into the hall, where they spend the night in feasting and merriment. No one can mistake the hall, for its roof is made of shields and held up by rafters fashioned from spears. Its western door is guarded by a great wolf, and an eagle flies over it. The feasts are prepared by the cook, Andhrimnir. He boils the boar Saehrimnir in a huge cauldron. The feast made from the boar is the finest and Odin shares it with his wolves. But Odin does not eat, for wine is nourishment enough for the All-Father. Every morning his two ravens, Huginn and Muninn depart to fly across the nine worlds, only to return with news. He fears that Thought may fail to return, but as great as his fear is, he fears more that someday Memory might lose its way back to him. The mighty river Thund roars outside the outer gate of Valhalla. It is known as Valgrind. The slain, fear the river is too wide and deep for them to pass over it, but if they succeed, they will pass through the inner doors behind Valgrind. These doors are ancient and sacred and few know the secret of how to bolt them. There are five hundred and forty doors in total, in Valhalla. Through these doors will march eight hundred warriors abreast when the time come to wage battle with the forces of evil.

“The Hall of Thrymheim is situated in the mountains, cold and wild swept. It was once owned by the great giant Thiazzi, but he was killed by the Gods for stealing Idun’s golden apples. Now his daughter, the fair Skadi, who married Njord, lives there.

“One of the most beautiful palaces is Bredabilk, the Broad Splendor. It belonged to the beloved Balder. It is untainted by evil. Heimdall lives in Himinbjorg, the Cliffs of Heaven. From there he watches the gates to Asgard, drinking his fine mead. And in the Folkvang, the Field of the Folk, lives the beautiful Freyja. She chooses half the dead with Odin and decides if they will come to live with her in Sessrumnir, the hall she lives in.

“Then there is Glitnir. Its silver roof is supported by pillars made of red gold. This is the hall where Forseti lives. He sits within, judging and resolving disputes and conflicts. Another hall is located by the sea and is called Noatun. Njord lives there. Lastly there is Vidi and it is the property of Vidar. Rich green grass grows around Vidi, and from Vidi Vidar will ride out to do battle and avenge his father’s death.

“Outside of Valhalla there is a goat by the name of Heidrun. She eats the branches from the Yggdrasil. Everyday she is milked and produces enough of the white drink to satisfy the thirst of all who inhabit Valhalla. There is also a deer that wanders the fields outside of Valhalla, and is named Oak-thorned. He also nibbles the branches from the World Tree. From his horns flow the river Hvergelmir, the Roaring Cauldron. From this river flows every river in the Nine Worlds. Remember that from the Yggdrasil, the Life Force of the Cosmos, all rivers of life flow.

“Now listen to me as I tell you their names. Slow, Broad, Sekin, Ekin, Cool, Loud-bubbling, Battle defiant, Fjorn, Rin, Rinnandi, Gipul, Gopul the Torrent, Old, Spear-teeming, Vin, Holl, Tholl, Grod and Gunnthorin; these are the names of the rivers that flow through Asgard and carried from the most holy of lands the divine essence of the Gods to the race of man.

“But there are other rivers. Vin and Vegsvin that leads to the future, Nyt and Naut, the river that carries people away, Nonn, Hronn, Slid, Hrid, Sylg, Ylg, Vid, Van, Vond, Strond, Gjoll and Leipt; these are the rivers that flow through Midgard and control the destiny of men. After flowing through Midgard, they carry the souls of men with them and plunge down into Hel.

“Each day the Gods leave Asgard and meet in council at the Well of Urd. They ride across the rainbow bridge, Bifrost on their steeds named Joyous, Golden, Shining, Swift, Silver-maned, Sinewy, Gleaming, Hollow-hoofed, Gold Mane and Light Feet. All ride except the mighty Thor. He must wade through the rivers Kormt, Ormt and the two Kerlaugs on foot.

“The Cosmos is held up by the World Tree, Yggdrasil. Through it the Life Force emanates throughout the nine worlds of the universe. The mighty Yggdrasil has three roots. One is embedded in Niflheim, another in the world of the frost giants and the third is in Midgard, where the most divine well exist and is known as Urd’s Well. It is here that the Gods meet every day and decide on the future of their children. All day the squirrel Ratatosk runs up and down its trunk. He conveys insults between the lordly eagle that resides in the loftiest branches of the tree and the were-worm Nidhogg, the Corpse Sucker, who chews on the branches of the great tree. Four buck deers nimble on the leaves of the tree. Their



names are Dain, Dvalin, Duneyr and Durathor. Yggdrasil suffers terribly. The hardships that it must endure are greater than mortal man can comprehend. Its leaves and branches are eaten, its roots are gnawed and its trunk rots.

“In Valhalla the daughters of Odin serve those whom the Terrible One has gathered there. Their names are Shaker, Mist, Axe Time, Raging, Warrior, Might, Shrieking, Host Fetter, Screaming, Spear Bearer, Shield Bearer, Wrecker of Plans and Kin of the Gods.

“Sun is hauled across the sky by two powerful steeds. Their names are Arvak the Early Walker and Alsvið the All Swift. They are chased by the wolf Skoll, and he will never give up chasing Sun until the end of time comes and he runs her down into the Iron Woods. But another wolf, Hati, chases Moon, Sun’s brother.

“From the flesh of Ymir the earth was fashioned, and the oceans were created from his blood. The hills and mountains were shaped from his bones, the trees and vegetation were grown from his hair, and the sky over head was made from his great skull, and out of his brains they formed the clouds within the sky.

“For all things there is always something that is the finest example, and this is so with Skidbladnir, the finest of all ships, made by the sons of the dwarf Ivaldi. It was a gift for the fair Frey. Of all the trees, Yggdrasil is the greatest, just as Odin is the greatest of the Gods. His steed, Sleipnir is the fastest of all horses. The rainbow bridge, Bifrost is like no other bridge. Bragi is the master word-smith. Hobrok is the swiftest of all hawks and Garm is the fiercest of all hounds.

“Now listen to me. I have many names, so let me tell some of them. I am called Grim the masked One, Gangleri, Herjan the Raider, Hjalmberi the Helmeted One, Thekk the Pleasant One, Thríði the Third, Thud the Thin One, Ud, Helblindi the One-who-blinds-with death, Har the High One, Sad, Svipall the Changeable One, Sanngetall the One-who-guesses-right, Herteit the Glad-of-war, Hnikar the Spear-thruster, Bileyg the One-eye, Baleyg the Flame-eyed One, Bolverk the Worker-of-evil, Fjölfnir, Griimnir the Masked One, Glapsvið, Fjolsvið the Very-wise One, Sidhott the Deep-hooded One, Sidskegg the Long-bearded One, Sigfod the Father-of-battle, Hnikud the Spear-thruster, Allfod the All-father, Atrid, Farmatyr the Cargo-God, Oski the Fulfiller-of-desire, Omi, Jafnhar the Just-as-high, Biflindi, Gondlir, Harbard the Grey-bearded One, Sviður, Sviðrir, Jalk, Kjalar, Vidur, Thrór, Ygg the Terrible One, Thund, Vak the Alert One, Skilving, Vafud, Hroptatyr, Gaut, Veratyr the God-of-men. These are the many names that I am known by in Midgard.

“But I am known by other names. Grimnir is the name I’m known by in Geirrod’s hall and Gelding is the name that Asmund knows me by. When I travel by sledge I am called Keel Ruler, and Vidur is what I am known by in battle. At the

council of the Gods I am called Thrór, and also as the High One and Just as High. Other names that I have been known by are Fulfiller of Desire, Shouter, the Terrible One, Breaker of Oath and Keeper of Oaths, Souter, Shaker, Wand Bearer, the Hanging God and Greybeard.”

Odin turned from Agnar and shout a terrible glare at King Geirroð.

“You have become intoxicated with your own greatness, Geirroð. Your drunkenness has robbed you of your wisdom. You have lost everything. Never again will I or the many slain warriors in my great hall Valhalla, help you again. You have lost the favor of the Gods because you have put your own desires before what is good for your people.

“I gave you the wisdom of the Asgard and you have chosen to ignore it. Your fate was written by your own greed. If you discard the wisdom of the Gods, then you have sealed your own fate. Power and authority comes from the will of Odin. To abuse it is to abuse what the Gods gave you. With power comes responsibility. If you use it properly, everyone prospers, but if you misuse it, it will be your downfall. By misusing what the Gods gave you, you have abandoned the Gods and now no power can save you for you are your own destruction. Look closely and see who you have betrayed—who you have tried to imprison and destroy. I am Odin! I am the Terrible One, the Thunderer, the Wakeful, the Shaker, the One-eyed, the Wanderer, the Bringer of Sleep and the All-Father. If you want to draw your sword to me, then do it now!”

Realizing his mistake, Geirroð, who was sitting with his sword half sheathed, jumped up and rushed to Odin to release him. But the sword fell to the floor, causing Geirroð to trip and fall on the sharp edge of the blade, skewing and killing Geirroð. With Geirroð dead, Odin disappeared and Agnar became king. He ruled for a very long time and was greatly loved by all his people, for he held precious the Life Force that man shared with their Gods.

## **XII: THE WISDOM OF LODDFAFNIR:**

In winter, men and women gather around to talk and drink. This was a common practice in the long, dark winter nights. They often sang of tales and told stories of heroes past. In one farm house, on one particularly cold night, Loddfafnir stood before a fire and began to relay the wisdom conveyed to him when once he looked into the Well of Urd.

“For a long time I stood before the Well of Urd and pondered and meditated on the meaning of life. I called upon the High One to tell me of his wisdom. I

saw a great door and from behind it I heard a voice speak to me. This is what the voice said.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Sleep deep and restful at night except when you need to stand guard or relieve yourself.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Beware of the spells that witches cast, for they will will ensnare you in their embrace. Feasting with friends and family will no longer have an appeal to you, and the taste of meat you will hate. The sweetness of life will no longer be to your taste and you will take to your bed in sorrow.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Always honor the sanctity of marriage and never seek love with another man’s wife. On whatever journey you set out on, always make sure you are prepared for all contingencies. Judge carefully all who makes your acquaintance, and learn to beware of those who speak lies wrapped in sweet words. Evil words that are spoken can be as deadly as the most lethal weapons.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. True friendship grows slowly over a long time, and it must be nurtured carefully with truth and honor.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. When you find someone who possesses great wisdom, treasure his friendship and learn from what he has to teach.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Never lie to your friends and family. Be honest in your dealings with those close to you or you will never be alone and loveless.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Choose who you associate with carefully. Low men will bring you down to their level, but your own kindred will stand by you and sing your praise. Seek comradeship among those men who can open their hearts to you and you to them. But beware of those men who speak nothing but lies, and can even wrap the true in falsehoods and make falsehoods seem truthful.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Guard what you say to

your enemies and never let them know what is truly in your heart. Be honest among your own kind for they will respect your truthfulness, but your enemies will seek to destroy you if they know what is truly in your heart.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Do not give your labor to those who would use it against you.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. When you discover evil make it known to your family, friends and kindred, and never make peace with your enemies.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. To do evil will only bring evil upon you, but to do good will bring happiness to you and all you know.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Never let your guard down with those who would do you harm, and beware of the evil words that your enemies would use to cause you to drop your guard.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. If you wish to win the love of a good woman and win her heart, always be true to the promises you make to her and always honor her truly.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Be on guard with those who would seduce you, and try to capture your heart and mind with false promises and intoxicating dreams.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Be true to your friends and guests and do not mock them to their faces or behind their backs. Do not betray your kindred.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Respect and honor those who have lived much longer than you, for in their minds is great wisdom and in their hearts is warmth beyond comparison.

“Hear me, Loddafafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Be compassionate and generous toward your kindred, but turn away those who are alien and foreign and

close the door to them, for they will bring you nothing but grief if you let them into your house.

“Hear me, Loddafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Love and provide for your family and always pass on your wisdom to your children. Bring your children up with a stern hand, tempered with even more love and wisdom.

“Hear me, Loddafnir, and remember well! If you heed what I say and learn to live by its wisdom, you will live a long and prosperous life. Keep your life in balance in everything you do. Love your neighbor but be weary of the stranger. The land will permit you to grow roots, fire will drive away the darkness and the oak will provide a secured dwelling. Learn to use the fruits of the earth wisely and the friendship of your kindred honorably.

“The High One spoke these words to me—for the good of true men, the children of the Gods and curses for their enemies, the sons of giants. I hail the giver of this wisdom and hail the receiver of the wisdom! Learn the wisdom and use it to prosper! Hail to you who listen!

### **XIII: THE WORSHIP OF ODIN:**

Odin is not only the highest of the Gods, but the most mysterious. His name means “Master of Fury.” All the other Gods and Goddesses are actually different aspects of Odin as he appears as the All-Father. This not only makes him the most complex, but the most dangerous to evoke. Odin should be remembered at all ceremonies, even if he is not the main God or Goddess that is being worshiped or celebrated. Because he is the master of magic, it is wise to also remember him whenever you try to evoke any of the Gods or Goddesses.

Odin has many names including; Yggr (the Terrible One), Grimnir (the Masked One), Sigfadhír (Father of Victory), Valfather (Father of the Slain), Har (the High One), Alfather (All-Father), Harbardhr (Graybeard), and Hroptr (the Maligned). Other names are; Drighten of the Spear, Cargo-God, Sig-Father, Wal-Father, Lord of the Gallows, Drighten of the Draugs, Hanged-One, Lord of the Gallows, God of the Hanged, the Awesome One, Hel-Blind, Hoar-Beard, Evil-Worker, Sigmunder (Victory-Gift), Raven-God, Raven-Tempter, Lord of the Raven-Blood, Father of Men, Old Man of the Berg, Eagle-Headed, One-Eyed, Long-Beard, Luller to Sleep, Slayer of Men, the Great Thuler, Thunderer, Bestla’s Son, the Old Wizard, the Wandering Wizard, the Wanderer, the Ruler of Valhalla, Irmin, the Lord of Hlidhskjalf.

Odin is both the Lord of Wisdom, Lord of Poetry and Lord of Magic. All three, wisdom, poetry and magic are three sides of the same triangle. There is a great deal of magical power within poetry and this is why we chant or sing the runes.

Odin appears as the leader of the Wild Hunt. He rides across the world, scooping up the dead. With him runs a pack of black wolves with burning red eyes. It is a dangerous time for people to be outdoors when the hunt is on, especially during the Yule time. The hunt takes place during the autumn and winter, but the twelve days of Yule are the most dangerous, and people will most likely be scooped up during these hunts. If one should see Odin and not die, he will probably go mad, because Odin takes his most terrifying form on these hunts.

He sometimes appears as a ferryman, leading the dead to the underworld. But Odin also leads the dead back to the world of the living.

#### **XIV: THE WALKNOT:**

The Walknot (the knot of the slain) is a symbol for Odin and represents the Holy Trinity that is the foundation of all Indo-European religions (Christianity stole the concept of the Holy Trinity from our pagan religious tradition). It appears as three triangles interwoven. This shows the interconnected nature of the priest-warrior-farmer (creator).

#### **XV: RUNE NAME WODAN:**

Kvedulf Gundarsson describes the runic quality of Odin's name, spelled as Wodan, in his book, *TEUTONIC RELIGION*. "The runes of his name (wunjo, othalo, dagaz, ansuz and Nauthiz) reveal the various sides of his nature. The first two, wunjo "joy" and othalo "udal lands," are runes of clan and ancestry; these are the runes of Wodan the All-Father, sire of the Gods and of the greatest human lines of the North. The rune dagaz, "day," shows his highest and holiest nature; the moment of dawn, the awakening of the full consciousness which is Wodan's best gift to those who reach up towards him. Ansuz, "Ase," is the rune of Wodan himself, as the Old Icelandic Rune Poem makes clear with its reference to "the ruler of Walhall"; as God of poetry, of death and rebirth, God of both inspiration of madness, of the winds that blow through all the worlds, Wodan's true nature is shown in the stave. Lastly, nauthiz, "need," is the rune by which Wodan works to turn the wyrd of the worlds so that new life can spring forth after Ragnarok."

## **XVI: THE VALKYRIES: THE BATTLE MAIDENS OF ODIN:**

They are the daughters of Odin, and perhaps they possess mortal mothers. Legends speak of them as mortal women who were given immortality by Odin so long as they obeyed the All-Father and remained virgins. They are considered the personification of the clouds, and their weapons are the lightning bolts. They would sweep down on battlefields and retrieve the spirits of fallen heroes. Those that they brought back to Asgard were divided between Freyja (who often led the Valkyries and chose first) and Odin. Those who went to live with Odin joined the ranks of the Einherjar, and will ride out at Ragnarok, behind Odin, to do battle with the forces of destruction and chaos.

The Valkyries are depicted as extremely beautiful, young with dazzling white skin, and flowing golden hair. But they are also fierce and it can be a frightening experience to behold them. When they ride out to retrieve the fallen they are dressed in battle gear and carry terrible weapons. They ride through the sky on great white mounts. Freyja would lead them on their mission, and she has first choice among those who are brought back to Asgard. Sometimes they would join Odin on his Wild Hunts across the world seeking the souls of great heroes.

The battle maidens also serve the Einherjar in Valhalla. They serve them the mead of life in horns. The Einherjar would each day, do battle on the fields surrounding Valhalla, until all have killed each other. But at the end of each day they would spring back to life and spend the night in celebration and merriment. It is during these nightly feasts that the Valkyries serve them the mead of life. So the Valkyries are not only the collectors of the dead, they are the givers of life. They represent the spirit wife which is the essence of the Gods and thus, the Life-Force itself. They are sometimes thought of as Shining Brides and the vehicle of achieving a higher state of existence. They represent the elevation of the soul, and maidens serving mead in horns should be part of any celebration to Odin.

As the givers of life and the instrument by which the individual can evolve to a higher existence, the Valkyries don't just chose warriors who die in battle. Their mission is to carry the souls of great men who have heroically devoted themselves to the advancement of the Folk. Whether it is through the struggle on the battlefield, or the battle of ideas, all who have dedicated their entire lives in the name of a higher ideal, and there is none higher than service in the name of the Folk, are chosen by the Valkyries.

# 5

## *FRIGG, THE MISTRESS OF ASGARD*

### **I: THE QUEEN OF THE GODS:**

Frigg or Frigga, is the wife of Odin, and the daughter of Njord (Fjorgynn). Her name means pleasure and beloved in old Indo-European. The marriage of Frigg with Odin was the cause of great celebration, and all of Asgard held a great feast in honor of the union. For this reason, Frigg is always called upon, along with Thor and Odin, to bless all weddings. She is the Goddess of Domestic Affairs and the supporter of the traditional social order between the sexes and the family. She is not only the Goddess of Marriage, but also the Goddess of Childbirth, and thus the Goddess of Motherhood. She can be associated with the Roman Goddess, Juno and the Greek Goddess, Hera.

Frigg is the Goddess of the Clouds, and represents the atmosphere that encircles the world. She is sometimes presented as wearing either white garments or dark garments, depending on her mood. This represents the changing of her moods, just as the clouds can change color from white to grey (calm or stormy). Because of her marriage to Odin, she is the Queen of the Gods, and first among the Goddesses. This gives her the privilege of sitting on Odin's throne, Hlidskialf. Thus, she too can look upon the nine worlds and watch over events that unfold throughout the cosmos. This often results in her warning or complaining to Odin of the violations of marriage vows by both mortals and Gods. She also possessed the knowledge of the future.

She was presented as a tall and stately woman, beautiful and crowned with heron plumes, which symbolizes silence and forgetfulness. Sometimes she is robed in white with purple lining, which is secured with a gold girdle. From the girdle hangs a bunch of keys. The keys represent the status of a patroness of the family or clan, or mistress of the household. Frigg resides in her own palace, named Fensalir (the Hall of Mists of the Sea). She spends most of her time at her



jewel-speckled, gold spinning wheel, spinning gold threads or webs of clouds that represent the destinies of the Folk. The spinning wheel is her symbol and she uses it to weave the intricate interlocking threads that make-up the community. This means that she is also connected in some way with the Norns, and the three Norns, are different qualities of her knowledge of the past, present and future which can be determined by the well being of the community. Both Frigg and the Norns weave—the former weaves of the destiny of the Folk community and the latter of the individuals that make-up the Folk community. There is even a constellation in the night sky known as Frigg’s Spinning Wheel, which is known by the Greeks and Romans as Orion’s Belt

The spirits of men and wives who led virtuous lives and healthy, happy marriages are always welcomed and invited to reside in her palace, where they might enjoy each others’ companionship for all eternity. Frigg is the Goddess of Conjugal and Motherly Love. She is worshiped by both lovers and married parents. It is good to call on Frigg to ensure a permanent marriage and unshakable and eternal love.

Frigg was known by many names throughout Europe. One name she was known by was Holda, (Hulda or Frau Holle). As Holda, she was renown for dispensing gifts and she also controlled the weather. Snowflakes thought to have fallen from her bed and rain when she was washing her clothes, while the clouds were considered her linen set out to dry. When people saw long, thin clouds, they said she was weaving. Holda was thought to have given flax to mankind and taught us how to use it.

## **II: THE STOLEN GOLD:**

Frigg is known for love of adornment, jewelry and gold. One day she stole a piece of gold from a statue of her husband, Odin, that was newly placed in his temple. She thought that if she took the gold from a statue representing him, and had it fashioned into some form of a necklace, it would possess the power to ensure his love for her. So she stole the gold and took it to the dwarfs, She knew they possessed great powers of smith-craft and magic, and ordered them to use the gold to create a marvelous necklace for herself that would possess such powers. When the dwarfs completed their task, she discovered that the necklace did increase Odin’s love for her, but when Odin discovered that the gold was missing from his statue, his anger and rage were beyond description. He vowed that he would punish whomever it was that stole his gold. He immediately suspected the dwarfs, whose lust for love is renown, and summoned them to his throne. But no matter how he

threatened them, the dwarfs refused to reveal what they knew. They loved the Queen of the Gods, and kept her secret. Odin realized that he was not going to discover who stole his gold from the dwarfs, and so he took his statue and placed it above the entrance to his temple and set about fashioning runes that would instill the power of speech to the statue, so that the statue would reveal to him, who it was that stole the gold.

When Frigg saw what Odin was up to, she began to fear that he would discover, it was she, who stole the gold. She called her favorite maidservant, Fulla, and asked her to invent some form of magic that would protect her from Odin's wrath.

Fulla loved her mistress and wasted no time. She went to the dwarfs and found one who claimed he possessed the magic spell that would counter Odin's rune-spell, and prevent the statue from speaking. The dwarf agreed and hastened to the temple where he cast a spell, causing the temple guards to fall asleep. While they slept, he knocked the statue to the ground, causing it to break into a hundred pieces.

When Odin discovered this sacrilege, he was so angry that he stormed out of Asgard, taking all his blessings with him. While he was gone, some of his brothers tried to take his place, but their powers fell far short, and they failed to maintain the order that was the essence of Odin. In his absence, ice-giants decided to take advantage and invade Midgard, covering the world with their icy breath. They ruled the world for six months, filling it with snow and froze. An icy mist covered the land and freezing winds roared over hill and valley. They would have continued to reign, but for the fact that Odin decided to return. When he did, the ice-giants fed back to Jotunheim. Odin returned his blessing to the world and restored the green and warmth that is summer.

### **III: FRIGG OUTWITS ODIN:**

Frigg was not always fearful of Odin. She was known for her cunning nature and often outwitted him. She could use her womanlike attributes to convince Odin to do as she pleased. On one occasion, the cerebral pair was watching the events unfolding on Midgard from Hlidskialf. They took an interest in the events taking place between two tribes known as the Vandals and the Winilers. The two tribes were about to go to war. Odin favored the Vandals, but Frigg favored the Winilers. Frigg asked Odin who he favored, but Odin wished to evade her enquiries and said that he had not decided. He promised to decide in the morning and would bless whichever tribe he happened to see first, and then went to bed.

Odin knew that his bed was positioned so that he would see the Vandals first. He intended to look upon Midgard from his bed, and not wait until he mounted his throne. In this way he would see the Vandals first, and bestow his blessing on them. But Frigg was cunning and waited until Odin fell asleep. She then gently turned his bed so that it faced the Winilers when he woke. Frigg then descended to Midgard and told the Winilers to dress their women in armor and battle dress. She told them to carefully comb their long hair down, around their faces and under their chins, so it looked as if they wore long beards. The Winilers did as Frigg suggested, and in the morning they stood on the battlefield.

When Odin woke in the morning, he looked out upon Midgard. His glance fell upon the Winiler women dressed as warriors. He was surprised to see them and acclaimed, "What Longbeards are those warriors?"

Frigg heard Odin and immediately declared that Odin had just given them a new name, and he was honored bound by the customs of the North, to give them a baptismal gift.

Odin did not protest and did as Frigg suggested. He gave the Winilers his blessing and promised them a new land for them to inhabit. They were eventually led by Odin and Frigg to the fruitful plains of Northern Italy, and were afterwards known as the Lombards. They eventually came rule all of Italy, and Frigg is the patroness of the land of the Romans.

## **IV: FULLA, FRIGG'S MAID:**

There are many handmaidens who resides in Frigg's palace. They are all beautiful and loving and serve Frigg exclusively. The first among these maids is Fulla (Volla), who is her younger sister. It is to Fulla that Frigg trusts most and entrusts to her, her jewel chest. Fulla held a special place within Frigg's palace, and was permitted to wear her jewels and golden slippers. She accompanies Frigg everywhere and is considered her alter ego. She is often sent by Frigg to help the mortals of Midgard and is entrusted with Frigg's most sacred secrets.

Fulla is described as very beautiful, with long golden hair that flows loose and down to her waist, restrained only by a golden circlet. Fulla is also known as Abundanta and is considered a symbol of the fullness of the earth and fertility.

## **IV: HLIN, FRIGG'S SECOND SERVANT:**

Frigg's second servant was named Hlin. She is the Goddess of consolation. She is sent to kiss away the tears of those who morn and grieve and she can fill their

hearts with joy and happiness. She personifies mercy and tenderness, and cares for those who need relief from pain and suffering. She always hears the prayers of those who call upon her, and she will relay their prayers to her mistress, Frigg.

## **V: GNA, FRIGG'S SWIFT MESSENGER:**

Gna is known as Frigg's messenger because she rides her steed, Hofvarpnir (Hoof-Thrower), across the nine worlds, crossing fire and air, land and sea. She is considered the personification of the refreshing breeze. Gna watches all, and reports back to her mistress everything that happens in the nine worlds.

One day, as Gna rode across Midgard, she noticed the king, Rerir of Hunaland, who was a direct descendant of Odin, sitting mournfully. Gna reported back to Frigg what she saw. Frigg gave Gna an apple from her garden and sent her on her way, after instructing Gna what to do. As Gna rode past Rerir, she dropped the apple into his lap and smiled upon him.

Rerir held the apple for a moment, and then realized that it was a gift from the Queen of Asgard. He hurried home and presented the apple to his wife, who quickly ate the fruit. In nine months, Rerir's wife gave birth to a son. Volsung was his name, and he grew into one of the greatest heroes of the North, and the first in a long line of a superior race of man.

Frigg's apple was the gift of evolution and through her blessing of family and children, the Folk will grow and develop

## **VI: OTHER MAIDS TO FRIGG:**

Three other maids that serve Frigg are Lofn, Vjofn, and Syn. Lofn is mild-mannered and gracious and her name means Love. It is her responsibility to remove all obstacles that lie within the way of true love. Vjofn has the task of removing discord between husband and wife. She has the power to melt even the coldest heart and helps to bring peace among warring nations. Syn's name means Truth. She stands watch on the entrance to Frigg's palace and refuses to let anyone enter that she deems unworthy to be inside. She passes judgement on those who seek Frigg's help and can prevent or make things happen, especially when it concerns the affairs of the heart and marriage.

One of Frigg's servants is a very talented physician. Her name is Eira and she dispenses the knowledge of healing to men and women throughout our Folk. In ancient times, medicine was the restricted province of women, but today, Eira teaches her craft to both sexes.

Vera holds the duty of punishing all who break their oaths.

Voer (Faith) is a seeress and knows everything that is to happen.

Snorta, the Goddess of Virtue, is the mistress of knowledge and science.

## VII: GEFION:

It is Gefjon's task to watch over all who never marries. She welcomes them and makes them happy, and helps them find true love in the next world.

Gefjon married a giant and has four sons from this union.

She was sent by Odin to the King of Sweden and asked him for land that she might rule. The king told her that he would give her all the land that she could plough in one day. She agreed and transformed her four sons into oxen. She hooked them up to a plough and they set out at once, pulling the plough through the earth. So much land did she plough that when she was finished, she made her four oxen pull it out to sea and called it the island of Seeland

As for the huge hallow that was left behind, it was filled with water and called Logrum (sea), but today it is known as Maelar, and its very shape corresponds to the headlands of Seeland.

Afterwards, Gefjon later married Skiold, one of Odin's sons, and their offspring produced the Danish tribe known as Skioldungs. She lived in the city of Hleidra or Lethra, which became the principle site for sacrifice among the ancient Danes.

## IX: BERTHA, THE WHITE LADY:

In Thuringia, Germany, Frigg was sometimes known as Bertha, Brechta or simply as the White Lady. It was believed that she lived within a mountain. It is her duty to watch over the souls of unborn babies, and those who die at birth. She is also an Earth Goddess, and cares for plants, trees and all things associated with agriculture.

Many noble families claimed descent from her, including Charlemagne of the Franks. The White Lady sometimes appears before a death or when other misfortunes takes place. She also wanders through the land during the twelve nights of Yule, inspecting the way the mother of the house is keeping up her household and family. If she is pleased at what she sees, she will bestow great gifts on the family, but if she is displeased, she will bring misfortune to the household. It is considered wise to do a great deal of baking, especially cakes, during this time of year. Holda is pleased with the act of baking, for it shows her that the mother of

the household cares about the well being of her family. She is also known as the Great Huntress and sometimes rides with her husband, Odin, on his Wild Hunt, riding a white horse.

In Holland she was known as *Vrou-elde*. The Milky Way was associated with herwa known as the *Vrou-elden-straat* by the Dutch.

In ancient Germany, during Roman times, she was revered as Nerthus and associated with the sea. She lived on an island named Ruegen, in the North Sea and rode a sacred wagon, pulled by two cows. During her feast day, all warfare and fight must cease.

Throughout Europe, in the most ancient times, people often claimed to have seen a white lady appear to them, usually at a sight with a natural spring or stream. They helped her in watching over nature and agriculture, ensuring the return of spring and the blooming of all vegetation. The Hohenzollern family claimed descent from her, and she was reputed to appear in their palace before a death of other misfortune was about to happen. But throughout Europe, the appearance of the White Lady did not necessarily mean misfortune was about to strike. People claimed that the White Lady appeared to them to convey knowledge of the future. Sometimes it was good news, but other times she warned them of great misfortunes. In Christian times people continued to see her, but because they were brought up as Christians, they viewed her as manifestations of the Holy Mother, usually Mary. She often appeared to children and sometimes she would cause a spring to form which is suppose to have healing powers. Even today, there are several places throughout Europe where millions of people journey to every year to seek a miracle.

In Scandinavia she was also known by the name, Huldra, and she resided over a tribe of wood-nymphs who visited mortals and like to dance upon green fields. They watched over cows and other farm animals. Sometimes, people traveling through the woods claimed that if you listen carefully, you could hear them singing their merry songs.

## **X: EASTER: THE GODDESS OF SPRING:**

Ancient Europe celebrated the arrival of spring by giving thanks to the Goddess known as Easter. She was also known as Ostara, and her name has survived in the English word Easter. The resurrection of the earth was celebrated in the Easter festival, and symbols of fertility, such as the rabbit and the egg were used to commemorate the Goddess Easter. Easter is another name for Frigg, and she was so beloved in this manifestation, that the Christians could not degrade her memory

and transform her into a demon. Instead, they adopted the name Easter to celebrate their most important holiday, the resurrection of Christ. Such pagan symbols as the rabbit and the exchanging of colored eggs are still used during the Christian feast.

The old celebrations to the Goddess of Spring involved placing the Easter Eggs on alter made from stone, that were called Easter Stone. The stones were crowned with flowers, and young people would dress up and dance about the stone during the day, and at night they would dance about bonfires.

# 6

## *THOR: THE PROTECTOR*

### **I: WHO IS THOR?:**

The champion of the Aesir and the defender of both Asgard and Midgard is Thor, the Son of Earth (Joerd, Jord or Erda). He protects both the Gods and mankind from the destructive forces of the giants. Thor is depicted as a massive God with red hair and beard. He actually is very similar to Hercules in appearance and personality. He is armed with a mighty hammer, Mjollnir and wore a pair of iron gloves to assist him in throwing and catching the hammer. He also wears a girdle of strength. His power is so great that it makes him so heavy that if he ever tried and crossed the Rainbow Bridge, it would collapse under his weight. As a child Thor was renown for his size and strength. Like Hercules he preformed marvelous feats of strength. Because of his great strength and volatile temper, he was sent to two foster parents by his mother when he was a child. They were Vingnir (the Winged) and Hlora (Heat). They were the personification of sheet-lightning and eventually taught Thor to control his temper. They educated him wisely and instilled in him good manners and the meaning of honor. Thor, recognizing the debt he owed them assumed the names of Vingthor and Hlorridi in their honor.

The cult of Thor was popular and widespread in ancient times. It was the most popular of cults, and Thor was the favorite of most people. The common folk especially loved and honored Thor, and maintained temples in his honor throughout the northern regions of Europe. Thor was the most popular of the Gods and is still the most benevolent. In the past, men did not fear Thor and could always trust him and count on him for help. He is the most outspoken of the Gods and possesses an indomitable personality. He acts in a forceful and fearless manner. His temper is quick and mercurial. Like the Vedic God Indra, who he sometimes resembles, he has an inexhaustible appetite. This is connected with his great strength and physical vitality.



Thor never conspired or tried to use trickery when dealing with the giants. He was always direct and forceful. When a giant insulted him, or threatened him, he simply threw his hammer at the giant, crushing his skull. This directness appealed to the common people who possessed a wealth of common sense. When you are faced with a problem, simply deal with it as quickly and honestly as possible.

When Thor attained his full growth he was welcomed and admitted to Asgard and received the honor of occupying one of the twelve seats in Odin's great judgement hall. He was Odin's first born, which is a way of indicating the birth of a new God from an attribute of the old God. Thor also owns the realm of Thrudvang or Thrudheim, where he built himself a palace known as Bilskirnir (Lightning), which is the largest of all palaces in Asgard. Within it is no less than five hundred and forty halls or chambers and here thralls (common people) are always welcomed and treated equally with everyone else. Thor is the strongest of the Gods and the defender of the Gods and of men. He is sometimes known as Whip-it-up-Thor or Oeku-Thorr (Driver Thor). He was known to the Finnish people as Ukko (The Thunder God). He lives in a castle known as Bilskirnir (Lightning) and it has five hundred and forty rooms.

In Norway Thor was held as the highest God for some time. He usually was second in the pantheon of Gods throughout the northern regions of Europe, behind Odin. Sometimes he was depicted with a crown made from stars and burning flames so that his head was shown to be surrounded by a halo. Again, this predates Christianity. Christians often depicted their saints with halos.

## II: THOR'S HAMMER:

In the temples dedicated to Thor, images of him always showed him holding a hammer. The hammer was named Mjollnir or Mullicrusher (the Crusher). It was the greatest treasure the Gods of Asgard possessed because it protected them against the giants. When Thor battled the giants, he hurled it at them. Its destructive power was feared by the giants and they often tried to steal it away from him. The hammer possessed the marvelous ability of always returning to Thor's hand after he threw it, and he needed a pair of iron gloves called Iarn-griper, to hurl it and catch it. The hammer was always red-hot and was considered the emblem of the thunderbolts. Thor also wore a girdle of strength called Megin-gioerd, which doubled his strength, thus giving him the ability to throw his hammer.

Thor's hammer was considered a sacred symbol of protection, and people would make the Sign of the Hammer to protect themselves against evil. They would place the tips of the fingers on the right hand on the forehead and say, "In Odin's name," and place the hand in the center of the chest and say, "and in his son, Balder," and then on the left shoulder and then the right shoulder and say, "and in Frey's and Freyja's, may the mighty Thor protect me." Later, Christians corrupted this custom by transforming it into the Sign of the Cross, placing the hand on one's stomach, instead of the chest. The Sign of the Hammer was used to ward off evil or secure blessing. Sometimes Frey and Freyja's names were replaced by Tyr, Balder or Frigga, depending on which Gods and Goddesses were held in special esteem by individual tribes. This song was also used over newborn children and water was poured over the head and a name bestowed upon the child, and accepted into the community. This ritual of name-giving was also corrupted into the sacrament of Baptism by the Christians. The hammer was also used to drive in boundary stakes, which was considered sacrilegious to remove. The ancient Romans also practiced a similar ritual and considered Jupiter, who was associated with Thor by the Romans, as the defender of boundaries. The hammer was used to hallow (bless or enshrine) the threshold of a new house, at wedding ceremonies and at funerals. At Balder's death Thor stepped forward and hollowed the ship by waving the hammer over it before it was set alight.

The hammer was considered a force for regeneration. It was a symbol of the Life-Force that we share with the Gods. When Thor feasted on his goats, he made the Sign of the Hammer over the bones and skins in order to restore them back to life. The hammer was also used in ceremonies to bless fields and crops. It possessed fertility powers of reproduction. Men often wore the symbol of Thor's hammer in the form of a hammer-shaped amulet around the neck or suspended from the belt.

The Romans also associated Thor or Donner, as Germans called him, with Hercules. Hercules, like Thor was the son of the All-Father and was specifically created to defend the Gods against the threat of the titans (giants). Hercules has much in common with Thor. Their appearances were similar, right down to the red beard, built and temper. Hercules is also depicted as carrying a great club, which was a weapon to do battle with the titans.

The handle of Thor's hammer was unusual. It was always depicted as short in length. This would make sense because a short-handle would be needed if the hammer was thrown through the air. The handle was also shown with a large ring at its end. This would also increase its effectiveness, as in the case of the hammers thrown in the Scottish Highland games.

### III: CELEBRATING THOR:

When celebrating Thor, men maintained many temples to the Thunder God. His figure was prominent and his priests wore rich robes and made sacrifices of meat and bread in his honor. He was looked to by the people when they had to make difficult decisions. One of the more prominent temples in Thor's honor is described as possessing a huge image of Thor sitting in a chariot. The chariot is connected by two goats. Rope made from silver is tied to the goats' horns. In Thor's hand he holds his mighty hammer. It was customary to remove the figure and pull Thor in his chariot by men on days held in his honor. The wheels of the chariot were rigged to make a noise that resembled the sound of thunder. The priest wore rings of gold and silver and oaths were taken to Thor while holding a ring. This was known as the Ring of Thor. This ring was an arm ring and was made of twenty ounces of silver. In Thor's temple, the altar was made of iron. On it, a sacred flame was always maintained and never permitted to go out.

Many places and habitats have been given Thor's name. Thunderhill in Surrey, England is one example. One of the names of the week has also been named after Thor—Thursday. Thursday is the sacred day for Thor and the second most sacred day of the week after Wednesday, which is named after Odin.

Thor is the friend of the common folk and is considered the most benevolent. He is the friend of the people who battles the forces of evil in their defense. His principle feast day is the Yuletide, and it is customary to burn a huge log in his honor. This practice has been co-opted by the Christians in the ritual of burning the Yule log at Christmas time. The Yule log represents the warmth and security of home and hearth and the family. It drives away the darkness and evil that dwells within it.

It is traditional for brides to wear something red. Red is Thor's color and the color represents love. In ancient times the bride's ring contained a red stone for the same reason.

### VI: THE CONTEST BETWEEN THOR AND ALVIS:

Thor is known to have two wives. His first wife was the giantess Iarnsaxa (iron stone). She bore him two sons by the name of Magni (strength) and Modi (courage). Both sons are destined to avenge their father's death and survive Ragnarok. Thor's hammer passes into their keeping until his resurrection in Gimli. Thor's second wife is Sif, the golden-hair Goddess of Spring. Thor also had two children

by her. The first is a son by the name of Lorrider, and a daughter by the name of Thrud. Thrud was renowned not only for her beauty, but also for her size and strength.

The dwarf by the name of Alvis (the omniscient one) fell deeply in love with Thrud after seeing her and sought to woo her as his bride. Alvis was determined to have Thrud as his wife and placed a spell over her heart and mind. But he could not accept her hand without first winning Thor's permission. So Alvis set out for Bilskirnir, Thor's great hall, in quest of receiving Thor's consent for his marriage to Thrud.

Alvis set out from the realm of dark elves to Asgard after sunset. He traveled by night for dark elves fear the light of the sun, which had a terrible effect on them—it turned them to stone. When he reached Thor's hall he entered and bravely marched right up to the Thunder God and declared his intentions.

"I have come to claim Thrud as my bride," Alvis said bluntly. "I have traveled far and now that I'm here, I intend to take the woman I love back to my home as my wife. Thrud has already declared her willingness so there is no need to waste any more time."

Thor stared down on the little dwarf. "Who are you?" asked Thor. "Or, should I ask, what are you? Your nose is large and your eyes are red and squint. Your skin is the color of burnt coal and you look as if you sleep with the dead. Just what kind of monster are you? And how dare you demand that I surrender my daughter to you as your bride."

The dwarf raised himself up straight, which looked comical before the great God. "My name is Alvis," he said, "and I am all-knowing. I live in a great hall beneath the earth, hewn out the rock and stone buried far below, safe from the evil rays of the sun." He then raised his hand with his index finger pointing at Thor. "I've produced great works of wonder and powerful weapons for you Asgardians and now I've come to claim Thrud—the agreed price for my deeds. Do not break the oath of the Gods, Thor."

Thor laughed, but did not lose his temper. "I know of no oath given to you by Asgard," he said. "I am Thrud's father and I alone will decide who she marries. That is the right of a father, and no dwarf will take from me my right."

But Alvis expected Thor's reaction. "You have no right to decide for whom your daughter will love," Alvis said. "She loves me and desires to wed me. Would you break your daughter's heart? What kind of father would be so cruel as to crush his daughter's heart?" The corners of Alvis' mouth curled with malice.

"How dare you come barging into my home and think you are worthy of seeking the hand of someone better than you?" Thor said. "You call yourself all-

knowing, but all the knowledge and education in the nine worlds does not elevate you to that of your betters. Your body is still foreign and your soul is still alien.”

“What do I see in the eyes of the mighty Thor?” Alvis asked. “Do I see fear?”

Thor could see the trickery of the dwarf. There was nothing Thor feared unless it was harming his daughter, who he loved so dearly. “I am not only the father of Thrud, but also the father of marriage. No marriage can be blessed without my consent. If you want my daughter in marriage, you’ll first have to win her.”

“A challenge,” Alvis said. “As the one challenged, I have the right to decide the contest. This I will accept.” Alvis smiled. “I’ll prove my worth and have your snow-white daughter as my bride. I chose the contest of knowledge. Ask me any questions and I will answer them. If I fail, then I will go as I came, unwedded and alone, but I answer all your question, I go married with Thrud as my bride.”

Thor agreed.

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: There is a land that stretches around all things, around all nine worlds? What is it’s name in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “It is called Earth by men, and the Aesir call it Field, the Vanir call it Ways, Evergreen is the name for it among the giants, Grower by elves and the holiest Gods call it Clay

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: What names are there for the sky that sails overhead in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “The sky is called Heaven by men, and Height by the Aesir, Wind Weaver by the Vanir, High Home by the giants, Fair Roof by the elves and Dripping Hall by the dwarves.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name of the moon in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “It is called Moon by men, and Mock Sun by the Aesir, Whirling Wheel in Hel, Rapid Traveler by the giants, Gleamer by the dwarfs and Time Teller by the elves.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for the sun in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men call it Sun, and the Aesir called it Orb, the dwarfs call it Dvalin’s Delight, the giants call it Ever Brigh, the elves call it Fair Wheel and All Glowing it is named by the Vanir.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for the cloud in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Clouds is the name among men, and the Aesir call them the Chance of Showers, the Vanir call them Wind Kites, the giants say Hope of Rain, the elves named them Weather Might and in Hel the clouds are referred to as the Helmets of Secrets.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for the winds in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men named them Wind, while the Aesir call them Waverer, the Vanir call them Neigher, the giants Wailer, the elves Roaring Traveler and they are known as the Blustering Blast in Hel.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for stillness in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men call it Calm, and the Aesir call it Quiet, the Vanir named it Winds’ Hush, the giants say Sultry, the elves call it Day’s Lull, and the dwarfs refer to it as Day’s Refuge.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for the sea in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men call it the Sea, the Aesir named it Smooth-lying, the Vanir call it Waves, the giants refer to it as Eel Home, the elves named it Drink Stuff and the dwarfs named it the Deep.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for fire in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men call it Fire, the Aesir call it Flame, the Vanir call it Wave, the giants refer to it as Hungry Bitter, the dwarfs Burner and in Hel it is called the Hasty.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for wood in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men call it Wood, the Aesir call it the Mane of the Field, the Vanir call it the Wand, the giants fuel, the elves Fair-limbed and in Hel it is referred to as Seaweed of the Hills.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for night in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men refer to it as the Night, the Aesir named it the Darkness, the Vanir call it the Hood, the elves say Sleep’s Soothing, the giants call it Lightless, and the dwarfs call it the Weaver of Dreams.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for the seed in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men call it Barley, the Aesir call it Grain, the Vanir Growth, the giants call it Edible, the elves call it Drink Grist and in Hel it is called Slender Stem.”

“Alright Alvis! If you are all-knowing and all-seeing, then tell me this: what is the name for ale in all the nine worlds?”

“That’s easy enough,” the dwarf said. “Men refer to it as Ale, the Aesir as Beer, the Vanir as Foaming, the giants call it Cloudless Swill, in Hel it is known as Mead and among the sons of Suttung it is called Feast Draught.”

“You truly are all-knowing,” Thor said. “You seem to know everything under the sun that is except what time the sun risings in the east.” Thor smiled at the dwarf and then looked out of the east window.

Alvis’s eyes opened wide as he turned to see what Thor was looking at. As he did, the first golden rays of the rising sun struck him and turned him into stone. As Alvis turned to stone, his spell over Thrud died with him and the sun shined in Thor’s heart once more, for he had won back his daughter’s heart.

On this day Thor proved that intellect along can not measure up to purity and honor and the rational of the dwarf is no match for Thor’s common sense.

## **VII: THE GOLDEN HAired SIF:**

Thor’s primary wife was named Sif. She was as lovely and beautiful as a spring day. Fair and enchanting, her most magnificent feature was her long, blond hair, the color of the sun, that grew down to her ankles in a brilliant veil. Sif represents the newborn earth and nature in its most fertile state that is the season of spring. Her hair was a symbol of the long grass or golden wheat that grew in the fields. She is the swan maiden of the elder race of Gods. Sif is also a Goddess of peace and friendship as well as representing a loving family environment. She is also the essence of the Life-Force of our folk, the children of the Gods, and this is why she is the wife of Thor, the defend of the folk. She compliments Thor as the God of fertility and her name simply means ‘wife’. Her name thus means the giver of life, or children. Her importance for women should not be under rated. She was once the wife of Njord, and they had a son who is Uller, the God of Winter, and only became Thor’s wife after the war between the Aesir and the Vanir. This would mean she was one of Vanir who settled in Asgard.

## VIII: HOW THOR GOT HIS HAMMER:

Thor loved Sif without limits and was especially proud of her hair. Before he left, he kissed his wife goodbye. That night Sif slept alone in their bedroom, in Thor's magnificent hall, Bilskirnir. No one noticed a lone figure creeping through Thrudheim and into Bilskirnir that night. The Shape-Changer was able to enter Sif's bedroom unnoticed. Breaking into places where he did not belong was not new for Loki. It was his nature to go where he was neither wanted or did not belong. With ease he crept to Sif's bed, and smiled to himself as he watched the Goddess sleeping. He pulled out a knife and bent over Sif. She continued to sleep, breathing deeply, unaware of the evil that the Trickster was about to perform upon her. As the symbol of healthy and pure love between man and women, Loki hated her. He smiled to himself at the thought that her husband, Thor, her protector, had left her so defenseless. Loki looked at Sif's golden locks that were spread about the bed. He ever so gently took the strands of hair in one hand and with the other, he quickly cut the locks from Sif's head. By the time he was done, Sif was bald. Loki left the hair sprawled about the bedroom floor. After tucking his knife away, he grinned with delight at the evil he had preformed, and then swiftly and stealthily departed.

When Thor had returned, he hurriedly went to his wife's side, but to his amazement, he found his beloved Sif lying in her bed, hiding under the covers and crying. When Thor asked her what was wrong, she continued to cry and begged him to leave, for she did not want him to see her. But Thor insisted and being his wife, she consented as a good wife should and pulled the covers aside.

Thor gasped in horror at the sight of his beloved Sif. She sat on the bed and looked up at her husband through tear-filled eyes. Thor could not speak at the sight of Sif sitting before him totally bald. Only after the light that shined from within her perfect heart that filled the room did Thor notice for the first time, Sif's golden locks strewn about the floor. Thor stepped back in horror and shook with anger. Raising his head to the roof and with arms stretched wide, he let out a cry of anguish so terrible that all the Gods and Goddesses throughout Asgard could hear it. When Thor looked back at his wife and saw the pain in her eyes, he fell onto the bed and took his wife in his arms and hung her close to his breast, covering her face with kisses as he tried to comfort her. Her sorrow now pained him more than the loss of her hair that he loved so much, for he loved his wife more than life itself.

"There could be only one creature so vile, so despicable to do such a dastardly thing—Loki!" Thor cried out. Springing to his feet he charged out of the Bil-



skirnir in a rage that would put even a berserker to shame. His anger caused black clouds to gather and lightning and thunder to fill the skies, as Thor went in search of Loki.

Loki heard Thor's cries and tried to hide from him by changing his shape, but no matter what shape he took, there was no way he could hide from the anger and hate that burned in Thor heart. His hate and rage gave Thor a sight that could see all truths and tear apart all lies. Thor soon overtook the Evil-doer, and grabbing him by the throat and lifted him off his feet.

With feet dangling in mid-air Loki begged for forgiveness. "A harmless prank," Loki cried, as he tried to loosen Thor's grip around his neck. "Please, Thor, it was only a joke. I meant no harm."

"Is this you're idea of a joke?" Thor demanded. "Would you like to see my idea of a joke?" As Thor held Loki with one hand he raised his other hand, which was closed into a fist, and was about to slam it down on the head of the Trickster.

"A Joke!" Loki cried once more. "I meant no harm and I will undo the harm that I did."

It was not the whining of Loki that stilled Thor's wrath, but the sobs of his wife. For if there was a chance, no matter how small, to undo the harm that Loki did to Sif, Thor would agree to spare Loki. His love for Sif was greater than his hatred for Loki. "What can you do to make amens?" Thor asked.

Loki looked at Sif for a moment. His tongue licked his lips and his fertile mind search for a solution. "I will replace the hair with hair that is even more noble and graceful," Loki finally said.

Thor loosened his grip. "How?" he asked.

"With the help of my friends, the dwarfs," Loki said. "If anyone has the skill to do it, it is the dwarfs."

"I hope so, for your sake," Thor said, as he dropped Loki to the ground.

Loki released a cry of anguish as his posterior hit the earthen floor.

"If you don't make good on your promise," Thor growled, "I'll hunt you down and crush every bone in your body with my bare hands."

Loki hid his fear and put on the best bravo he could conjure-up. He stood tall as he straightened his cloths and brushed off the dust. "No need to worry," Loki said and winked at the Thunder God, and was off before Thor could say another word. Out of Asgard he flew, pass Heimdall and over the Rainbow Bridge he fled and did not stop until he finally reached Svartalfaheim, the realm of the dark dwarfs. He search among the crags and fissions until he came to a great cave. From its mouth smoke and ash bellowed and he knew he had reached his destina-

tion. The cave was the home to two dwarfs, the sons of Ivaldi, the Father of the Dwarfs.

Loki wormed his way into the bowls of the earth to Svartalfheim until he found Ivaldi's sons hard at work in their smith-shops. Loki asked the sons of Ivaldi for their services, explaining that Sif had lost her hair, though he did not tell them how she lost it, and asked them if they would be so kind as to fashion new hair for her out of the finest and purest gold. "Once I discovered the terrible thing that happened to Thor's wife, I immediately knew that only the sons of Ivaldi had the skill to help poor, dear Sif," Loki said in the most compassionate voice he could conjure up. "I have come a long way to ask you if you would be so kind as to use your magical skills as smiths, to make such hair?" Loki said.

"But what will we get out of such a deed?" one of the dwarfs asked.

"Why, I'm sure you will receive the everlasting, undying appreciation of mighty Thor and his beautiful wife. And, of course, I too will be in your debt and would be willing to come to your assistance if ever you should have need of it in the future." Then Loki smiled and with a twinkle in his eyes he said, "And everyone knows that the appreciation of three Gods is worth a hundred time more than all the gold and riches in the nine worlds."

The dwarfs could see that though Loki was offering only promises, they knew that even promises from the Master of Lies was still binding. And so they agreed to Loki's request.

"But if you really want to win the good will of the great Gods of Asgard, you might want to consider a gift to the All-Father and Frey as well," Loki said. "It couldn't hurt."

The dwarfs agreed once more and immediately went to work piling wood on their furnace deep in their cave. One of the dwarfs worked the bellows until the fire was white hot, while the other dwarf took gold and placed it into the heat while he hammered away, spinning and fashioning the gold into very long and super-fine strands of hair, as he murmured spells of dwarf-magic.

Loki watched with delight. His face glowed from the heat. His hands twisted as he rubbed them together with joy, as he watched the marvelous craftsmanship of the dwarfs. When the dwarfs were finished, they placed the strands of hair over Loki's outstretched hands. So light and fine they were that even the slightest breath caused them to shimmer.

But the dwarfs did not stop when the hair was completed. They continued to work the bellows and cause the fires to burn even brighter and hotter. Without rest or stopping they quickly forged a great ship that they called *Skidbladnir* for Frey, and then they proceeded to forge a mighty spear, long and straight, named

Grungnir, for Odin. When they had completed these tasks they explained to Loki the magic qualities of the gifts.

“Touch the tips of the hair to Sif’s head and they will immediately and permanently attach themselves to her, and will grow as if they were real hair,” the dwarfs explained. “The ship that we made is unlike any other ship. It can sail over water and air and can be folded into a tiny compass and placed in one’s pocket when not being used. The spear will fly true and to the mark every time it is thrown. It will never miss its mark no matter what the circumstances.”

Loki was so pleased that he showered the dwarfs with a storm of thanks that seemed endless, even for the Master of Lies. He declared the sons of Ivaldi the greatest smiths in all the nine worlds and promised to let all who he met know of their great gifts of magic and smith-working.

As Loki made his way through the underground passageways of Svartalfheim a most wondrous idea popped into his nimble mind. He quickly turned around and began to make his way through a long passageway that led to the hall of the two brother-dwarfs, Brokk and Eitri.

The two dwarfs saw Loki. They could see that he was holding three marvelous treasures, the golden hair, the ship and spear. And instead of welcoming him they stared at the treasures. Loki did not protest why they took the treasures from him to examine. Over and over they looked at the three treasures with a scornful snare. Loki could see into their hearts and knew they were filled with envy and jealousy at the marvelous craftsmanship with which they were fashioned.

“You have never see such exquisite workmanship as that which manufactured those items,” Loki said, “because there is none that can come close to matching it.”

“Not true,” Brokk said.

“Oh? Do you know of anyone who could match the skill that fashioned those treasures?” Loki asked.

“Yes, I do,” Brook said.

“Who?” asked Loki.

“We can,” Eitri said bluntly.

“Really?” Loki said in a slow and methodical way, as if the thought was just now filling his mind. “If your skill is greater, then you should be able to fashion treasures to equal—no, surpass these marvelous devices.”

“We could,” Brokk said.

“Easily,” Eitri said.

“Then do so,” Loki demanded.

“Why should we?” asked Brokk.

“To prove to the nine worlds that you two are the master craftsmen,” Loki said shrewdly.

“Would you like to make a wager?” asked Brokk.

“Loki thought for a moment and then said. “Yes. I’ll wager my head against your heads that you could not possibly make three treasures the like of these.”

The two dwarfs immediately accepted Loki’s wager. They realized that if they were as good as their boost, they could not only rid themselves of Loki once and for all, but the treasures of the sons of Ivaldi would be their’s.

Brokk and Eitri told Loki to remain in the hall, and they provided drink and nourishment for him while they left to fulfill their part of the bet. They departed to their smithy. Brokk began piling wood into the furnace while Eitri place a lump of gold into the fire. He began hammering the gold into long, very thin pieces of gold wire. Next he placed a pig’s skin on the fire and told his brother, “Pump the fires as hard as you can and whatever happens don’t stop until I have finished and pull the treasure from the fire.” Eitri said.

Brokk began pumping the bellows as hard as he could and the fires grew white hot. Sweat pored down his face but he did not stop. Then, a small fly appeared and began flying about the two dwarfs. It finally landed on Brokk’s hand and bit him, but Brokk ignored the pain and kept pumping the bellows. Finally, Eitri finished his task and pulled Gullinbursti out of the forge. Gullinbursti was a boar that possessed bristles of gold.

Next, Eitri fetched another block of gold, much larger than the first, and placed it on the forge. Brokk continued to pump the bellows until heat made the gold was soft and malleable. Eitri then began hammering and shaping and told his brother to keep pumping the bellows and stop for nothing.

Brokk did as his brother said, but the same fly returned and landed on Brokk’s neck. It bit him there twice, causing Brokk to flinch, but the dwarf refuse to let go of the bellows. He kept right on pumping them just as his brother instructed. When Eitri finally pulled the treasure he was working on out of the fire, he held a gold arm-ring in his hand.

Finally, Eitri placed a large chunk of iron on the forge and told his brother to pump the fires until the iron was white hot. Brokk did as he was instructed while Eitri hammered and pounded the iron, reshaping it over and over. For a very long time the dwarfs pumped and hammered until they both ached from the pain, but they did not stop. The heat burned their skin red and the sweat poured from them, but still they continued their work uninterrupted. “Do not stop now,” Eitri said, “or all our work will be wasted.”

As Brokk continued to pump, the fly returned once more and buzzed around Brokk's head. It finally settled between Brokk's eyes and bit him on both eyelids. The blood poured down Brokk's face and into his eyes, blinding him. The dwarf was unable to see what he was doing and for just the smallest moment, he took his hand off the bellows to brush the fly from his forehead and the blood from his eyes. The fly flew out of the smithy chamber and once it was in the outer hall, it immediately transformed itself into its true form—Loki. For Loki had turned himself into the fly to plague the dwarfs in their task. He returned to his seat and drank from his horn of mead, waiting for the dwarfs to return, and pleased with himself.

When Eitri finally pulled the iron from the fire he cried out in anger at what he saw. He held a powerful iron hammer in his hand, but the handle was obviously too short. He examined it carefully, and though he was disappointed by the misshapen handle, he was satisfied that the hammer was not entirely spoiled. He called the hammer Mjollnir. So massive and powerful it was, the two dwarfs stared at each other and nodded their approval that the hammer might be short in the handle, but it was still the most powerful weapon that anyone had ever created.

When they returned to the hall they handed the ring, the boar and the hammer to Loki. "Take this ring, this hammer and boar and present them to the Gods as gifts from my brother and myself," Eitri said. "My brother, Brokk, will go with you to Asgard to claim your head."

"Don't be too sure of that," Loki said.

"I'm sure that when the Gods judge the treasures for themselves, they will agree that our treasures are superior to the three that you got from the sons of Ivaldi."

"We will see," Loki said and then he departed with Brokk.

Loki and Brokk finally reached Asgard. Word of their coming had reached Asgard before they arrived. When they finally reached the shining fields of Gladheim, all the Gods were waiting for them sitting in their high seats. Loki immediately began telling the Gods of his journey to Svartalfaheim and bragged how he was clever enough to exploit the greed and envy of the dwarfs to extract from them six gifts.

Brokk listened to Loki tell of how he was able to convince the dwarfs to create the gifts and finally said, "Talk it up, Loki, for soon you will lose you head and the power to speak."

"What do you mean?" asked Odin.

Brokk told the All-Father of his wager with Loki and it was agreed that the Gods, Odin, Thor and Frey, would sit in judgement and decide which of the gifts were greater. Loki began describing the gifts that the sons of Ivaldi created for the Gods.

“This spear is for you, Odin,” Loki said. “It is named Grungnir and when you throw it, it will always hit its mark.” Odin took the spear and examined it carefully. “You can use the spear to stir up wars and make men keep their oaths.”

Loki then turned to Frey and gave him Skidbladnir. “This is the most remarkable ship,” Loki said. “You can fold it small enough to place it in your pocket, and yet it is big enough to hold an entire army armed to the teeth. As soon as you hoist its sail, it will sail over water and sky and never fail to find enough wind to propel it.

Finally, Loki turned to Sif. “My third gift is the fulfillment of my promise to Sif and Thor.” He presented the long, flowing strands of gold hair to Sif. “Place it to your head and it will take root and grow as if it were your own hair. Your beauty will be restored and then some.”

Sif took the hair and did as Loki said. As soon as she placed it to her head, the hair took root and it was as if she had never lost her long, flowing hair. Everyone at Gladsheim cheered for Sif, who was more beautiful than ever.

After Loki was finished presenting his gifts, Brokk stepped forward with his gifts. “I have here a gold arm-ring,” he said. “It is a gift for the all-wise Odin. It is known as Draupnir and it is not merely a ring made of gold. Every ninth night, eight additional gold rings will drop from it.”

Brokk next turned to Frey and presented him with his gift. This bor of gold is named Gullinbursti. He has the power to run faster than any horse or steed, and he will never grow fatigued. He can run over land, sea and air, but there is more. Because his hair is made of gold, where ever he may run, even at night or in the darkest caverns, he will always take the light of the sun with him, for his golden hair will shine like the sun.

“My third treasure is for the mighty Thor,” Brokk said “It is a hammer and its named is Mjollnir. Within it is the power of the thunderbolt. Nothing can break it and no weapon is as powerful as this hammer.” The Storm God took the hammer and raised it. It took all his strength to lift it. “It will hit its mark every time you throw it,” Brokk said. “And it will always return to your hand, not matter how far you throw it. And when you are not using it, you can make it small enough to hide in your shirt or pocket.” All the Gods stared at the hammer. Never had they seem such a weapon possessing such powerful magic. “There is only one small flaw in the hammer, Brokk confessed. “Its handle is too short, but

I think it may actually be a benefit, for it is easier to throw because of it.” Brokk looked at Loki and smiled.

Odin, Thor and Frey did not need any time to consider their decision. They were all of one mind and considered the hammer, Mjollnir, the most important gift of all. It was more important than all the other gifts collectively because such a powerful weapon as the hammer could defend Asgard against any attack by the giants.

“We have decided in favor of Brokk,” Odin said. “Brokk has won the wager.”

“Then I will have Loki’s head, just as we agreed,” Brokk said.

“Instead of my head, which is useless to you, I will give you its weight in gold,” Loki said.

“I have all the gold I need and more,” Brokk said. “I will have your head.”

“Then you will have to take it, if you can,” Loki said, and he then raced away as fast as he could, running out of Gladsheim. Loki was wearing his shoes which could fly and carry him over land and water. Before Brokk could even turn to look at the Trickster, Loki was far away. The Gods laughed at the way Loki tricked the dwarf.

Brokk turned to Thor. “Where is the honor of the Gods? I have been cheated by Loki and the Gods do nothing. I thought honor was the essence of the Gods?”

Thor, who was still not pleased with Loki over what he did to Sif, agreed to bring Loki back to Asgard and make him pay the price he agreed to with Brokk.

It was not long after Thor stormed out of Gladsheim that he returned with Loki, dragging him by the neck.

“Now I will have his head,” Brokk said.

“Wait just a moment,” Loki said as Brokk reached for his knife. “It’s true I agreed to surrender my head, and it now belongs to you, but my neck is still mine. You may not touch any part of my neck.”

The Gods laughed and nodded at Loki’s demand. Brokk realized that Loki had tricked him once more.

“If your head is mine, then I will do with it as I please without touching your neck,” Brokk said. “If I can’t cut it off to stop your lies then I can at least sew your lying mouth shut.”

Loki laughed at Brokk, but the dwarf was serious. Brokk pulled out some cord and tried to cut holes into Loki’s lips with his knife, but failed. No knife could pierce the lips of the Master of Lies. He then spoke some magic words and a very sharp awl appeared in Brokk’s hand. “This is the awl that belongs to my brother, Eitri, and it is sharp enough to cut through even the lies of Loki. Sharp truth can

easily cut holes through any falsehood.” He then grabbed Loki by the head and began sewing up his lips with the awl.

After Brokk release Loki, the Trickster ran from Gladsheim. Once outside, he ripped the cord from his lips, screaming in pain as he did. He remained outside of the hall, but he could hear the laughter inside and it burned hot in his twisted mind. He swore he would have his revenge on the Gods for choosing the dwarf over him and permitting his mouth to be sewed up. The evil in his heart swelled. His lips slowly curled into the most wicked and twisted smile.

We must never forget that Loki is the destroyer of the folk. He cuts the hair from Sif, the Life-Force, and he must make restitution. He does this through the materialist powers of the dwarfs and uses deception and trickery to do it. He then tries to cheat the dwarfs and in the end the only way to curb his lies is with the sharp awl of truth. The evil doer must be made to undo the evil he does. It is the old story of a reaction to every action. Loki’s crime against Sif, the reproductive powers of the folk, compels the Gods to force him to produce good in the form life-giving treasures; Draupnir, the ring of reproduction and resurrection, Odin’s spear which is not only the instrument of war, but the defender of oaths and honor, both Frey’s gifts, the ship Skidbladnir and the boar, Gullinbursti are symbols of fertility and protection. But most of all, it is Thor’s hammer that is the greatest good that comes out of Loki’s crimes. Its power is not only destructive. Mjollnir also has the power of fertility and resurrection. Like nuclear power it can both destroy and create.

## **IX: THOR’S JOURNEY TO UTGARD:**

Thor declared the summer open season and announced his intension to travel to Utgard, where he hoped to challenge the giants. “Even one giant, is one giant to many,” Thor said. “I think they need some weeding out.”

“But that will take a wit sharper than your’s,” Loki said. “With your strength and my wits, we should be able to best all the giants in Utgard.”

Thor thought about what Loki said and agreed. He ignored the intended insult and invited Loki to come along with him.

“Than you will come with me,” Thor said. “Sometimes it takes a greater evil to defeat evil.” Thor smiled at Loki, who understood the insult. Thor was not so dull-witted that he could not return insult for insult.

“I would be honored,” Loki said. His eyes flashed blue to green to brown with delight. His twisted lips curled into a wolfish smile.

“We leave early tomorrow,” Thor declared.



It was still dark and the stars still possessed the sky when Thor had his goats (Toothgnasher and Toothgrinder) brought from Thrudvang and harnessed to his chariot. Loki had just arrived and jumped into the chariot along side the Thunder God. Thor pulled on the silvery reins and his goats raced across the fields of Asgard, pulling the Storm God and Trickster along until they were far beyond the borders of the holy realm of the Gods.

Towards Midgard they raced all day and through the night. Thor and Loki talked about many things, for though the two were very different they complimented each other and found a strange symmetry that existed between them. By the following morning they discovered that they were crossing rolling hills and green fields. It was dusk of the next day when they finally came across a lonely farm house. It was built of wood and its roof made of turf.

“Not much to look at,” Loki said. “The owner must be very poor. I doubt the owner could provide us with nourishment necessary to satisfy our needs.”

“What a man possesses in his heart is of greater value than what he owns in material wealth,” Thor said. “What they can not offer I can provide.” Thor pulled his chariot to a halt and jumped out of it.

The door to the farm house opened and out stepped the farmer, his wife and children. They recognized their guests immediately and feared their wrath.

“We need nourishment and shelter for the night,” Loki demanded.

The farmer was frightened, but he was proud. “You are welcomed to shelter here for the night,” the farmer said, “but there is little to eat.”

“Not even a chicken or pig?” asked Loki as he looked about.

“All we have is vegetables and potage,” the wife said, “and we would be honored to share it with you.”

Thor could see the pride in the eyes of the farmer and his wife. “We can provide enough meat for a feast for ourselves and for our most generous hosts,” Thor said. Without hesitation, Thor set about slaughtering his two goats. He then carefully skinned them and cut them into joints, making sure not to break any bones. He then gave them to the wife who brought them inside and set about cooking the meet.

The farmer, his wife and his son and daughter, Thialfi and Roskva, watch like ravenous wolves as the goat meat cooked over the fire. Thor then spread the goat skins on the floor and told everyone, “As you eat, carefully place the bones on the skin, but make sure no bones are broken.”

Once the meat was cooked, everyone sat down around the skins and began feasting. They did as Thor instructed, placing the bones on the skins without breaking them.

Loki watched Thialfi eat and could see how hungry he was. He leaned over to the youth and whispered to him, "The tastiest part of the goat is the marrow within the bone," he said. "I'm sure it would not matter if you broke one bone to get at the marrow."

Thialfi thought about what the mischievous Loki said. His voice seem to convey assurance to the youth. Thialfi was convinced that Loki could never lie and so, being as hungry as he was, he forgot Thor's instructions and broke one of the thigh bones to get at the good marrow within it.

After they had feasted, everyone was so filled that they all quickly fell asleep and slept soundly all night. Thor was the first up the next morning. After he washed and dressed, he took his hammer and held it over the skins and bones, raising it to hallow them.

Instantly, the two goats sprang back to life, but Thor noticed that one of the goats walked with a limp. His hind leg was damaged. Thor shouted for everyone to wake and demanded to know who disobeyed his orders and broke a bone.

Everyone shook with fear at Thor's fury. "Who disobeyed me?" shouted Thor. "One of the thighbones is broken. Who is responsible?"

Thor bristled with rage. His eyes turned red hot and his beard seemed as if it was on fire. The farmer and his wife begged ignorance. Then, when Thor grasped his hammer and raised it, the farmer and his wife began begging for mercy.

"Please spare our lives, oh mighty Thor," they pleaded. "You can take everything we own, our house and farm, but only spare our lives."

Thor's rage was unmatched by any living thing all the nine worlds and was quick to fire, but it was also just as quick to cool. The pleading of these good people touched his heart. Thor could never resist the honest repentance by good folk and he quickly felt mercy for the panic-stricken family. "I will spare your lives, but I will take your son and daughter, Thialfi and Roskva as my servants," he said, "and we will consider the matter at an end."

The farmer and his wife was not only relieved, but pleased. To serve the mighty Thor was not a punishment, but the greatest honor that could be bestowed upon any mortal, and they knew that their son and daughter were very fortunate indeed.

When Thor and Loki were ready to resume their journey, they handed Thor's goats and chariot over to the farmer and his wife for safe keeping. Thor told them that he would fetch them from them on his return. Thialfi and Roskva left with Thor and Loki when they departed.

For a long time they walked across the green earth of Midgard until they finally came to a great sea that divided Midgard from Jotunheim.

“We will rest here tonight,” Thor said. “Come morning, we will find a way across the ocean that stands between us and our destination.”

They all did as Thor ordered, and slept peacefully on the sandy beach. When morning arrived, everyone arose and searched until they found an old boat, long discarded, but still sea-worthy enough to carry them across the vast ocean. Everyone climbed into the boat and loaded their belongings. Thor found two oars and used them to roll them far out to sea. By midday Thor had rolled so far out to sea that they had completely lost sight of Midgard. By the end of the day they finally reach the shores of that section of Jotunheim that was known a Utgard, which was sandwiched between the sea and the mountains of Jotunheim.

The four travelers beached their boat and then proceeded to travel inland. They soon came to a great forest of tall trees and thick undergrowth. The forest was so huge that there seemed no way around it, so they agreed that they should go straight through it. Thor led the way, plowing a path through the woods. All that day they continued to struggle through the thick growth of the forest. They came across no signs of life except for the usual wild creatures that inhabited such woods. The air was sweet with the fragrance of pine and shadows seem to lurk under the thickest growth of trees. They continued to travel until it finally grew dark.

“Night will arrive soon,” Loki said. “We should find some kind of shelter before it does, so we can eat a light meal in peace and not become a meal for wolves that live within these woods.”

“So the father of Fenrir is afraid of wolves?” Thor laughed. Loki sneer but said nothing.

Thialfi was sent by Thor to scout out the forest. The task was an easy one for the lad who was quick on his feet and so agile that he could easily moved through the trees with little effort. Eventually he returned with news that he found a glade not to far away where he saw a round hall that was big enough for all of them to find shelter in for the night. Everyone followed Thialfi to the glade and when they found the hall, they were amazed by its shape. One whole side of the hall was open like a huge cave. The entrance was as high as the hall’s roof and as wide as the width of the hall. So big did the hall seem that even the largest of the halls of Asgard could easily fit within this structure.

At least we can keep dry and warm in this place,” Loki said. “It’s better than sleeping outdoors.”

After eating a small, cool meal, the Gods and the two youths, being worn out from their travels quickly fell asleep. But they didn’t sleep undisturbed for long. Around midnight, they were woken from their sleep by a terrible growling that

shook the entire hall. The noise grew increasingly louder. Everyone quickly leaped to their feet and the ground shook beneath them.

Thialfi and Roskva were terrified. Thor thought it was an earthquake. "We had better get out of the hall if it is an earthquake, because the entire structure might fall down on our head," Loki said.

But before they could exit from the hall, everything suddenly grew silent. The horrible noise stopped, as did the terrible tremors.

"If those tremors were caused by some monster or giant, it will be no safer outside than it is inside," Thor said. "I think we should explore the rest of this hall and find out for ourselves to see if there is someplace within it that might be safer."

All four of them began to make their way deeper into the cavernous hall. The air grew stale and the darkness increased the deeper they ventured. After traveling a short distance, they discovered a smaller hall that jotted out to the right. They discovered four more halls in the rear, all long and large. They decided the smaller hall on the right would be a better place to sleep.

"This looks like a good place where we could make a stand against any possible monster that might have been responsible for the tremors," Thor said. "If it was an earthquake, then it won't matter if we are outside or inside."

They agreed that they would spend the rest of the night in this smaller chamber. Thor promised to guard them against any danger. He sat himself down at the entrance of the smaller chamber with his hammer in his hand, while the others tried to get some sleep. But they found it difficult to sleep. Shortly after they fell asleep, they were woken by the sounds of muffled roaring. The sounds were coming from outside. They heard it repeated several times. Not knowing what was causing the noise, they lay awake all night, terrified by the noise outside.

In the morning Thor led the group out of the hall and into the morning light. They instantly discover the cause of the noise and tremors the plagued them during the night. There, lying on the ground, was a giant. He was asleep. He suddenly began snoring and his snoring reproduced the horrible noise and tremors they suffered during the night. Thor pulled at his belt of strength, given to him by the giantess, Grid, and felt his strength surge within him. He pulled at the giant's hair to waken him.

When the giant woke, he saw Thor standing next to him and stood up. The giant was as tall as a mountain. He was so huge that Thor did not hurl his hammer, Mjollnir at him. Instead, Thor asked him who he was.

The giant looked down at the Thunder God and said, "My name is Skrymir, and that means 'Big Bloke.'"

“The name surely fits you,” Thor said.

“I know who you are,” Skrymir said. “One look at you and I knew you are the mighty Thor.” The giant could see Loki, Thialfi and Roskva walking out of the opening of his glove towards Thor. I see you have made use of my glove during the night,” he said as he bent and picked it up.

Thor now realized that he had mistaken the giant’s glove for a great hall during the night. The four long halls were the fingers of the glove, and the smaller hall to the right, where they made camp for the night, was actually the glove’s thumb.

“What are you doing in these woods, so far from Asgard?” the giant asked.

“We are traveling to Utgard,” Thor said.

“Would you mine if I accompanied you?” Skrymir asked.

“Not at all,” Thor said.

“Then you are welcomed to eat and drink with me,” Skrymir said.

Thor and his companions were happy to take the giant up on his hospitality because they were low on provisions. After they had eaten their fill, Skrymir said, “Why don’t we pool our resources?”

Thor agreed.

“Skrymir took their backpacks and placed them into his own, larger bag and slung it over his back after tying it up.

When they left later that morning, the giant took such huge strides that Thor, Loki, Thialfi and Roskva did everything to keep up with him. But as hard as they tried, they could not match his speed, not even the swift Thialfi, as fast as he was, could keep pace with Skrymir. The giant soon left them far behind, but they could always determine in which direction he was traveling. All they had to do was follow in the trail of broken trees and huge footprints that he left behind, not to mention the sound of Skrymir crashing through the forest. It was late in the evening when they finally caught up to the giant.

When they found the giant he had already made himself comfortable for the night.

“I’m too sleepy to eat,” Skrymir said, “but you can take my bag and help yourselves.” Skrymir then laid back and fell fast asleep.

“There’s no shelter,” Loki said, “But at least we can eat.”

Everyone was starving from their long journey. Thialfi and Roskva thought about their parent’s farm, and wished they were back there, sheltered from the elements and sleeping nearby the fire in the fireplace.

“Make a fire while I get some food for us to cook,” Thor said as he grabbed the giant’s bag.

Thialfi and Roskva gathered wood and piled it up. Loki then caused the wood to burst into flames, but when they looked to see what Thor had retrieved from the bag, they discovered that he was not able to open it. The bag was tied with straps as strong as the rope Laeding that bound the wolf, Fenrir. As hard as the mighty Thor tried, he could not untie the straps and open the bag. His companions each tried to help Thor, but their efforts were futile.

Thor was become frustrated. His beard and hair bristled like fire with rage and his eyes flashed with lightning. He began too suspect that Skrymir had not meant for them to open the bag and he intended to keep all the provisions for himself. Not being able to contain his anger any longer, Thor grabbed Mjollnir and held it with both hands. He stood right over Skrymir's head as he slept. Planting both feet securely on the ground, Thor raised his hammer and brought it down hard on Skrymir's forehead.

Skrymir woke and sat up. "I thought I felt a leaf fall on my head," the giant said. He saw Thor standing nearby and asked him, "Did you and your companions have your supper yet? If so, then you should get some sleep."

Thor was amazed that the hammer's blow did not seem to hurt the giant. "We were just about to turn in," the Thunder God said. Thor and the others then laid down under the shelter of a huge oak tree, but sleep did not come easy to them. Everyone was concern and upset that Thor's hammer failed him for the first time since it was given to him.

No one could sleep and their insomnia was made worst by Skrymir's snoring. The noise was deafening. It caused the trees to shake and the ground to tremor. Thor finally decided that he had enough. Once again he made his way to Skrymir with his hammer in his hand. Standing over him once more, he raised his hammer and brought it down with all his might squarely on Skrymir's head. The blow was so hard that the hammer shook in Thor's hands.

Once again Skrymir sat up. "Did I feel an acorn fall on my head?" he asked. He then saw Thor standing nearby. "What are you doing here, Thor?"

"I also heard a noise and it woke me," Thor said. "I got up to investigate. But it seems to have been nothing and it's late and we should go back too sleep." As Thor turned to walk back to the oak tree, he fought to contain his anger. He vowed to himself that when he got another chance, he would not fail to send the giant to the depths of Niflheim.

Thor laid still all night, but he could not sleep. Then, shortly before daybreak, he rose and walked over to where Skrymir was sleeping. The giant was snoring once again and Thor could take it no more. He raised his hammer and slammed

it down into the giant's head. This time the hammer penetrated the temple of the head and sunk so deep that only its handle was visible.

Skrymir sat up for a third time. He saw Thor and asked him, "Did you see a bird? I think one of them dropped some of its droppings on me? I could swear I felt sometime land on my head."

Thor was dumbfounded and said that he saw nothing.

"Well, then, you and your companions should get ready. You should be able to reach Utgard today, but you might be in for a surprise. If you think I'm big, wait and till you see the size of those who live in Utgard. They make me look like a dwarf."

Thor listened to Skrymir without saying a word. But the giant's warning clearly upset the others.

"Let me give you some good advice," Skrymir said. "Utgard is ruled by the giant, Utgard-Loki and he and his men won't tolerate bragging and boasting. So keep your pride under control and be careful of what you say. You're too small to get on their bad side."

Thor was furious at the obvious insult, but he kept his anger to himself and said nothing.

"If you ask me," Skrymir continued, "I would suggest that you give-up your journey and return to Asgard as quickly as possible. But if you decide not to take my good advice, then you should travel east." Skrymir pointed in the direction that Utgard laid. "As for me, I'm heading north, so I'll be taking my leave of you."

Skrymir picked up his bag and slung it over his shoulder, and without so much as a goodbye or any other word, he began walking away, north as quickly as his huge legs could take him. Thor and his companions watched until he disappeared in the distance.

"Well, good riddance to him," Loki said. The others all agreed.

## **X: THOR AND UTGARD-LOKI:**

After the four travelers left the forest they walked all morning in the direction that Skrymir told them Utgard-Loki was located. The ground began to rise the farther inland they traveled. They came to a huge hill with, strange square-shaped holes in it. The holes were so huge and deep that they could not see the bottoms of them. They crossed ridges and valleys and soon descended into a plain where they found a massive fortress. The walls were so high that the tops disappeared into the clouds overhead. Thor and his companions realized that they had finally

reached their destination and proceeded to hurry up to the gates. They found the gates made of iron and they were locked. They could see through the bars, but they could not spot any guard or anyone else.

The hall beyond the gate was so huge they could not see the opposite end.

“They must be huge,” Loki said.

“The bigger they are, the harder they fall,” Thor said, but then he remembered Skrymir and how his hammer had no effect on him, and he grew increasingly uneasy.

“Try and open the gates,” Loki asked Thor. But when Thor tried to pry the gates open, he failed.

“I guess we’ll have to rely on brains over brawn,” Loki said, and he easily slipped through the bars. Thialfi and Roskva were both slender enough to pass through them with no problems, but Thor was another matter. Thor had to flex his muscles over and over until finally two of the iron bars gave way to his strength and he was able to slip through them.

Once all four of them were through the bars, they made their way into the hall. They walked for a long time until they came to a door. They found the door open and they quickly passed through it. They found a great many giants on the other side of the door of all ages and both sexes. Most of them were just as large as Skrymir and some were even bigger. They sat around the walls of the hall and when they saw Thor and his companions enter, they all stopped their chatter and stared at their uninvited guests. Many sneered at Thor, Loki and Thialfi and others ogled Roskva and made lewd remarks and suggestions towards the young maiden. At the far end of the hall, sitting on a huge chair, was a single giant known as Utgard-Loki. He stared at the four travelers without expression on his face until the four had crossed the hall and were standing before him. When they came to a halt, they courteously introduced themselves and greeted the master of the hall.

Utgard-Loki did not respond, but stared straight ahead, as if the four travelers were not there. He said nothing. Thor frowned, but before he could say anything, he was distracted by Loki, who yawned, as if bored by the sight of the giant king.

Thor turned by to the giant king. “Greetings!” he shouted. “My companions and myself have...”

“In Jotunheim,” Shouted Utgard-Loki rudely, interrupting Thor, “news travels slowly, especially when it originates from the other worlds. Sometimes guests arrive before the news of their coming reaches us.” The giant now smiled. “Should I assume that this tiny fellow is actually Thor-the-almost fishermen?”



Utgard-Loki said to the other giants gathered in the hall. He was referring to Thor's failure to capture the Midgard Serpent.

Thor was steaming with rage, but he contained his anger. He was a guest.

Utgard-Loki finally looked down at Thor. "Perhaps there is more to you than size alone?" he said. "Do you possess a skill unmatched by anyone else? We require everyone who wishes to lodge in this fortress to be the best at some skill. What skills are you four the best at?"

Loki could see that Thor was too angry to answer, and so he stepped forward. "I don't mean to boast, but anyone will tell you that there is no one in all the nine worlds who can match my appetite for food," Loki said with pride. "If there is anyone who is not afraid to accept my challenge, then I'm prepare to prove my skill."

Utgard-Loki was pleased by the challenge. "If you're right about your skill, than that would be an accomplishment," the giant said. "I know of a giant who's appetite is renown." Utgard-Loki look towards a giant sitting at the far end of the hall and called out to him. "Logi! Come here and pit yourself against Loki."

The giant king called for his servants to bring all the food that was ready to be eaten, from the kitchen into the hall for the contestants. They did as they were told and soon there was a mountain of food piled high before Utgard-Loki's throne. Loki stood at one end of the mountain of food and Logi at the other. When Utgard-Loki gave the order, they both began eating. In no time the two began devouring everything before them. The giants in the hall began cheering as the contestants continued to eat and gobble all the food. Eventually, the two contestants met in the middle, having devoured all the food, but while Loki ate all the meet he left the bones, while Logi ate both the meat and the bones.

"It look like Logi is the winner," Utgard-Loki declared.

Loki stared at the giant with malice and hate, and believed that he was bested by trickery, but said noting.

"Well, now," Utgard-Loki said as he turned to Thialfi. "What can this youth do? Does he have any exceptional talent?"

"I can run as fast as the wind," Thialfi said. "I'm willing to run a race with your fastest runner."

"Well said," Utgard-Loki said. "If you are the fastest, then that is a skill worthy of pride." The giant king shouted for one of his fellow giants. "Hugi!"

One of the younger giants stepped forward. Utgard-Loi then led everyone outside so that the two youths could race. They both took their marks and waited for utgard-Loki to give the order.

When the giant king gave the order, both Hug and Thialfi raced away, across the grass as fast as they could run. Their feet hardly touched the ground and those who watched could barely see them as they sped along. But Hugi reached the finish line so far ahead of Thialfi that he was declared the winner of the race.

“You certainly made a good show of it, Thialfi,” Utgard-Loki said, “and I must declare that I never saw a man from Midgard run so fast. Therefore, I’m willing to give you a second chance. Two out of three tries. Do you agree?”

Thialfi did agree and he and Hugi once again took their marks and raced away when the giant king once again gave the order to run.

This time Thialfi did better than before and came in right on Hugi’s tail, but he still lost.

“Thialfi lost once more, but this time he almost came close to matching Hugi,” Utgard-Loki said. “He did so well, that I think we should give him one more chance.”

For a third time the two youths took up their marks and waited for Utgard-Loki to give the order. When he did, they raced away faster than ever. But for a third time Hugi reached the finish mark before Thialfi. He seemed hardly out of breath. After this third time Utgard-Loki decided that the matter was closed and declared Hugi the winner.

Utgard-Loki now turned to Thor. “I’ve heard many wondrous things about you, Thor,” the giant said. “You’re always claiming to be great at something, so which one of your skills will you try?”

Thor ignored the giant’s insults. “I doubt if there is anyone here who can drink as much as I can.”

“Very well, a drinking contest it will be,” Utgard-Loki said.

Utgard-Loki led everyone back to his great hall. Once there, he called for the cupbearer to bring the scone-horn for Thor to drink from. The brimming horn was hauled out and given to Thor.

“If a man can drink the entire contents of this horn in one draught he is considered a good drinker,” Utgard-Loki said. “Most men take two draughts to empty it, but everyone here, even our children, can finish off its contents in no less than three.”

Thor examined the horn. It was the largest horn he had ever seen, and it was even longer. But Thor was very thirsty, and could not remember when he was more thirsty. Thor had not eaten or drunk anything for several days, and the giant king had not offered him and his companions any nourishment since they arrived. He lifted the horn and raised it to his lips and began drinking. He swallowed until he finally ran out of breath and had to stop. When he looked into the

horn, he was shocked to discover that he did not even make a dent into the liquid. It was still filled to the tip of the horn.

“Oh, well now,” Utgard-Loki laughed. “It would seem that you were not as thirsty as you thought you were.”

Thor’s eyes flashed with anger.

“Perhaps if you try a second draught, you might be able to finish it off,” Utgard-Loki said and offered Thor a second chance.

Without saying a word, Thor lifted the horn to his mouth a second time and let the drink pour down his throat until he had to stop to take a breath. When he looked into the horn, he discovered that he still had not emptied it of its contents. But the drink was now visibly below the rim of the horn.

Utgard-Loki sighed. “I’m afraid you’re just not thirsty today, Thor,” he said. “You must be playing with us, for surely you’re going to finish off the drink on a third try?”

Thor’s face turned red and he shook from the rage that burned within him.

“I’ve heard that you’re famous for all sort of great deeds, but I suppose drinking is not one of them,” the giant king said. “Perhaps you should give-up and try your hand at something else?”

Thor ignored the giant and lifted the horn a third time to his lip and swallowed and swallowed until he could not drink any more. But when he raised his head and looked into the horn, he saw that it was somewhat lower, but still far from emptied. Frustrated, Thor pushed the horn away. The giants in the hall began jeering, suggesting Thor try for a fourth time.

“It would seem that your prowess is not as great as you thought when it comes to drinking,” Utgard-Loki said. “Still, your fame is legionary. Do you want to try your hand at something else?” “I will try any contest that you put before me,” Thor said.

Utgard-Loki smiled and said nothing. He acted as if he was trying to think of something for Thor to try.

Being impatient, Thor demanded to know what Utgard-Loki wanted him to try his hand at.

“Since you do it so poorly with the drinking horn, I don’t want you to chance making a fool of yourself, so I suggest you try lifting my cat,” the giant king said.

Thor bristled with anger and was about to reach for his hammer over the obvious insult, but he was able to contain himself.

“I know it doesn’t sound like much of a feat, but many young giants often try their strength against my cat,” Utgard-Loki said. “Do you think you’re up to it, Thor?”

Before Thor could answer, a huge cat walked into the hall, as if it was waiting for some unseen signal for it to make its appearance.

Thor walked up to the cat and placed one of his massive arms under the feline and tried to lift it off its feet, but the cat ignored the Thunder God and simply arched its back. No matter how hard Thor tried to lift the cat, none of its paws left the floor of the hall.

All the giants in the hall began laughing and jeering at Thor. This only made Thor angrier and he stepped under the cat's belly once more, and with both hands he tried to lift the cat off the ground. This time the cat's back was arched high above Thor's head, but its four paws continue to remain firmly on the floor. The cat yawned as if it was bored by Thor's efforts. Thor tried once more and pushed even harder until finally, the cat was forced to raise one paw off the floor before Thor finally had to release it.

Utgard-Loki sighed a second time. "It would seem that Thor can't even best a cat," the giant king said. "But, it is after all a very big cat and Thor is something of a midget."

"If you think I'm such a puny weakling, then why doesn't someone step forward and wrestle me?" Thor said. The Thunder God glared at the giants sitting around the hall. He was hoping that one of them would step forward and accept his challenge. He knew he could take anyone of the them and was burning to unleash his fury on one of the giants.

But the giants ignored Thor's challenge and were still laughing at him. Utgard-Loki finally spoke. "I don't think anyone here will accept your challenge, Thor. Not that they are afraid of you, they just don't want to hurt you, but I think I can find someone in this castle who will wrestle you."

Thor was fingering his hammer and was hoping he would find a way to use it against the giants.

Utgard-Loki then called out for someone to go and get Elli, his old foster-mother. The giants continued to laugh and make fun of Thor.

"An old crone?" Thor asked. "You want me to fight an old crone?"

"She might be old, but she has best men mightier than you," Utgard-Loki said, as the giants continued to laugh. "Are you afraid to wrestle an old crone?"

"I will wrestle whomever you so chose," Thor said.

Just then, a terribly old and ancient woman hobbled into the hall. She slowly made her way to where Thor and the giant king was standing. Utgard-Loki welcomed her and asked her if she was willing to wrestle the mighty Thor?

Elli agreed and then threw her cloak to the ground and prepared to fight the Thunder God. Thor hurdled himself at the old woman, but as soon as he struck

her, he realized that she was far stronger than she appeared. In fact, no matter how hard he struggled against her, the stronger she seemed to get. Thor could not even move her, not even an inch. She just stood there and laughed at Thor's futile efforts.

Finally, Elli went on the offensives, and easily turned the tables on Thor. She was able to lock him in a hold as Thor struggle to hold on to Elli and bring her down with him, but his efforts were hopeless. Elli easily forced Thor down on one knee.

It was then that Utgard-Loki cried out for the contest to stop. "That will be enough!" the giant king cried out. "You have proved yourself as a wrestler, Thor, and there is no need to do more. I welcome you and your companions to my home and bid you to take nourishment at my table."

Thor and the others agreed. It was now late and everyone was starving. Thor, Loki, Thialfi and Roskva all ate and drank their fill and were made to feel most welcomed by all the giants in the hall. When the feasting was done, everyone wanted to turn in for the night. It had been a long day. Bedding was brought into the hall and the four companions slept alongside their giant hosts.

The next morning, Thor and his companions were the first to wake. They dressed and prepared themselves to leave Utgard. But before they left, Utgard-Loki woke and asked them to have breakfast with him. They agreed. Utgard-Loki woke his servants and they prepared a meal for them. In a short time Thor, Loki, Thialfi and Roskva were all enjoying their breakfast with the giant king.

Once they had finished eating, Utgard-Loki asked them to follow him. He took them through the hall where the giants were still sleeping and out of the hall. The giant king was in exceptionally good spirits. Once they were outside of the hall, he led them through the gates and into the countryside surrounding the fortress.

The air was cool and the sun bright. It was a beautiful morning for talking and walking. Everyone was enjoying the trek as Utgard-Loki took them a short ways away from Utgard. The giant seemed pleasant and genial compared to the way he greeted them when they had arrived the day before. But the giant's good spirits did not cheer-up Thor, who walked in silence. Loki was also silent, which was usual for him, because he loved to hear himself talk. Only Thialfi and Roskva seem happy to be away from the fortress. They both seem cheerful and talked amongst themselves.

"This is where I wanted to bring you," Utgard-Loki said. "I can't go any farther, but I wanted to see you off."

Everyone looked up at the giant.

“Are you pleased with the way things turned out on you stay here at Utgard?” asked the giant king.

“I must confess that they I am not,” Thor said.

“Have you ever met anyone as powerful as myself?” the giant king asked.

“The last thing I expected when I arrived at Utgard was to meet anyone who could best me,” Thor said. “I hate to admit it, but you put me to shame.”

“Then let me tell you what really happened,” Utgard-Loki said. “The truth is you really did best me at every turn. I can confess the truth to you now that we are outside the walls of Utgard.”

“What do you mean?” Thor asked.

“I knew that you were the strongest of the Gods of Asgard, but if I had known just how strong you really were, I would never have permitted you to enter my fortress. I promise you that I will never let you enter a second time.”

“Why?” Thor asked.

“Because you nearly put an end to us,” Utgard-Loki said.

Loki listened to the conversation between Thor and the giant king. His crooked lips slowly turned into a twisted smile. He began to learn something of Thor and the Gods in general.

“The truth be know, I used magic spells to trick you,” Utgard-Loki confessed. “I had transformed myself into Skrymir and then I had fastened the bag with wires so that you could not open it and retrieve your provisions. And you never really hit me with you hammer. If you had, you would have killed me with your first blow. Do you remember the hill you passed on your way here? The one with the three, square shaped, bottomless holes? Well, those were the dents that you inflicted when you thought you were striking my head. You were actually hitting the hill, which I had set between you and me.”

Thor listened to Utgard-Loki’s confession without comment.

“I also used spells to cheat each of you during your contest in Utgard,” the giant king said. “Loki ate very fast, but Logi was really the wildfires that ravish the wilderness with its destructive powers. And when Thalfi race against Hugi, he was actually running against his own thoughts. How could he possibly keep up with his own thoughts?”

Loki began to laugh at the brilliant way the giant fooled them, but Thor was not amused. The Trickster had learn that the Gods could be tricked by magic. It was a weakness that he did not intend to forget.

“And when you drank from the horn, Thor,” Utgard-Loki said. “You didn’t realize it, but you were drinking from the sea itself. I could not believe that you

actually cause the sea to sink. I think that from now on the seas will always rise and fall because of your great drinking prowess. And the cat, well, I could not believe that you actually lift one of its paws off the ground. That was the most amazing feat I, or anyone in Utgard, had ever witnessed. Did you know that the cat was actually Jormungand, the Midgard serpent that encircles the entire world. Everyone in Utgard was terrified by your feat of strength. But most of all, Thor, it was truly amazing how you were able to withstand the power of Ellie. She only caused you to fall to one knee. Did you know that Ellie was old age herself? No one can withstand old age. In the end she always wins.

“But now that I have told you all, I must part ways with you,” Utgard-Loki said. “I would warn you never to try and visit my domain again. If you do, I will use my magic again, but not to trick you, but destroy you next time, because you are too great an adversary.”

The giant’s confession cause Thor lose control of his rage. Without saying a word, he reached for Mjollnir and raised it over his head. Summoning all his strength, he flung it at Utgard-Loki, but the giant king was too quick and instantly disappeared.

But Thor would not be cheated a second time. He turned and aimed at Utgard itself, and flung his hammer at the fortress in the distance. But the stronghold had also disappeared. It was as if it was never there. There was only wilderness.

Having been cheated a second time, Thor and his companion left Utgard and returned to the coast. They crossed the sea and made their way to the farmer and his wife, and retrieved his goats and chariot. Then, with Loki, Thialfi and Roskva, he returned to Asgard and made his way to his home, Thrudvang.

## **XI: THE THEFT OF THOR’S HAMMER:**

One morning Thor woke from a deep and restful sleep, only to discover that his hammer had been stolen during the night. He jumped to his feet and began searching his great hall, in every room and chamber, but the hammer was no where to be found. His red hair and beard bristled with thunder as he roared his anger at the thievery committed against him. He then began searching all of Asgard and Midgard, but all the Gods and children of the Gods swore that none had seen his hammer.

Thor realized some form of sorcery had to be involved. He immediately rushed to find Loki. If anyone was responsible for the theft, or at the least knew

about it, it had to be the Master of Tricks. But when Thor finally found Loki, Loki swore that he knew nothing about the missing hammer.

“I swear to you that I know nothing of your loss,” Loki said. But Loki was lying. He had left the gates of Asgard open, and permitted a theft to enter the realm of the Gods and steal away the hammer. Thor was the protector of the Gods and the children of the Gods. He was the symbol of the continuation of a healthy folk, and the personification of those traits necessary for the preservation and growth of the folk. And Thor’s hammer, Mjollnir, was the instrument of protection, hallowing, birth and fertility and the preservation of the folk. The loss of the hammer weakened Thor and endangered both the Gods and their children in Midgard.

Loki was the best of liars and was able to fool the Thunder God. But Loki did not wish for the hammer to be lost, but only to use its loss to fulfill his mischief. So he promised to help Thor find the culprit who stole his hammer.

Thor and Loki went straight away to Folkvang, to see Freyja. They found her in her hall, Sessrumnir. They told her of Thor’s great loss.

“Will you please lend me your falcon skin so that I might search through out the nine worlds and discover who stole Thor’s hammer?” Loki asked.

Freyja did not hesitate. “Take the skin and find Thor’s hammer as quickly as possible,” she pleaded. She knew of the danger that both Asgard and Midgard faced without the hammer.

Loki then took the falcon skin and donned it. Once in the shape of the swift bird, he flapped his wings and rose into the heavens, but Loki did not have to search for long. He did not have to search all nine worlds, for he knew exactly where the lost hammer was. So Loki raced straight away toward Jotunheim, the realm of the giants and directly to where he knew that hammer was located. It was in the realm that was ruled by the king of the frost giants, Thrym.

Loki saw Thrym sitting in his great fortress. He was tending to his terrible horses and his horrible hounds of war. The Shape Shifter swooped down and landed next to Thrym. Thrym immediately recognized Loki, even in the disguise of a falcon.

“How are things with the Gods?” he said as he bellowed with laughter. “And what brings you to my domain?”

“I came in search of Thor’s hammer,” Loki said. “You might have heard that it is missing—stolen I believe.”

Thrym laughed once more. “Terrible news—for the Gods and their children in Midgard, but what has this to do with me?”

“Everything,” Loki said. “For you are the thief who stole it.”



Thrym laughed once again and it sounded hard and cold like the ice at the top of world. "And so I am," he said, "but I am also its new owner because I have placed it where the Gods will never reach it."

"Really?" asked Loki. "And where would that be?"

Thrym laughed again and his laughter sounded like the roar of crashing glaciers. "I will tell you because even if Thor knows, it is where he'll never reach it. I've hidden Thor's hammer eight miles deep beneath Jotunheim, buried under all the ice in Jotunheim. No one will ever see it again. You go and tell Thor and the rest of the Gods that if they want the hammer returned to them, then they must bring me Freyja as my bride."

Loki said nothing, but inside he was laughing to himself. He flapped his wings once more and flew out of Jotunheim and back to Asgard, where the Gods were waiting for him.

Loki found Thor waiting anxiously when he finally reached Asgard. Loki could see that Thor was still fuming with rage.

"Have you found where my hammer is and who stole it?" Thor asked.

"I bring good news and bad news," Loki said, and he enjoyed saying it. He told Thor everything that Thrym said, and the two of them then rushed to Sessummir for a second visit with Freyja. But when they told her of Thrym's demand, she was outraged.

"Never!" she screamed. "I will never agree to be that beast's bride!"

"But you must, my dear Freyja," Loki said. "If you want Thrym to return Thor's hammer, you must come with me to Jotunheim and agree to marry Thrym. If you don't, then the hammer will be lost forever and both Asgard and Midgard will be defenseless before the wrath of the giants."

Freyja could not contain her rage and all Sessrummir shook with her fury. Her face turned red and the muscles in her limbs bulged. Her breasts rose and fell and finally her Brising Necklace burst apart from the force of her anger.

"If I were to go to Jotunheim and marry this giant, I would be degrading the very purity of the Gods and their children."

"And if you don't, we will lose the protection of Mjollnir," Loki said.

"This is a terrible choice," Thor said. "We will either die from conquest, do to our lost of strength of body and mind, or die from the lost of our purity and honor. Either way, the Gods and their children are doomed."

Loki was pleased with the dilemma that faced the Gods. The lost of Thor's hammer meant the lost of strength, courage, honor and fertility, and the lost of Freyja meant the lost of the purity and essence of the Gods and their children. Either way, the Gods and their children in Midgard were doomed.

The bad news spread rapidly throughout Asgard, and soon every God and Goddess had come to Gladsheim to meet in solemn council to discuss the lost of Mjollnir. They were joined there by the Vanir and the elves and even Heimdall left his watch at the rainbow bridge. There were long and lengthy discussions on what to do and who was responsible for the lost of Thor's hammer. Though no one could prove it, most believed that Loki was responsible for the theft. Loki finally decided to lay his hand before everyone figured out that he was truly responsible for this black deed. He stepped up behind Heimdall and whispered something in his ear. Not realizing that it was Loki who put the notion into his head, the White God spoke up.

"I know how we can retrieve Thor's hammer and deny Thrym of the hand of lovely Freyja," Heimdall said.

All heads turned towards Heimdall.

"How?" asked Odin.

"Let us swaddle Thor as a bridle veil and pass him off as Freyja," Heimdall said. "Loki can then take him to Jotunheim and marry him off to Thrym, but before Thrym discovers who Loki has really brought to marry him, Loki will demand the return of the hammer."

For a moment no one said anything, but the silence was soon shattered by a thunderous roar of laughter.

When the laughter died down, Heimdall continued with his suggestion.

"To convince Thrym that it's really Freyja that Loki brings, we should repair the Brising Necklace and place it around his neck."

The Gods once again exploded in laughter, which only made Thor angrier. He leered at Heimdall, but the White God ignore him.

"We must do everything to make Thor look like a bride or Thrym will not be fooled," Heimdall continued. "He must wear a bride's gown and we must hang keys from his belt, and oh, yes, he must wear brooches on his breast. And don't forget the charming cap to complete the disguise."

"I don't like this one bit," Thor said. "It sounds to me that you're trying to steal my manhood and transform me into a woman."

Finally Loki spoke up. "Nonsense, Thor," he said, "Is your manhood so fragile that it will crumble by simply dressing up as a woman? Is your pride so great that you would rather see giants living in Asgard than put on a bride's veil?"

Thor could not answer because he knew that he must retrieve his hammer or all was lost.

So the Gods and Goddesses began dressing Thor as a bride. They swaddled him in a dress and placed a veil on his head and hung the Brising Necklace

around his neck. Brooches and a cap were placed on him and when they were done, he looked just like a bride, but everyone noticed that he looked like a very big bride.

“If you are going to fool Thrym, you’ll have to stoop a bit,” Loki said. “or Thrym will suspect a trick.”

Thor only growled his anger in protest.

When word reached Thrym that Freyja was coming to Jotunheim to marry him, he reacted with great excitement. “Freyja is coming! She will be my bride! Make everything ready for her arrival!”

Thrym made sure everything was ready for the arrival of Freyja. No detail was too small. His servants ran about making sure everything was just right for the arrival of the Goddess of Love and War.

When Loki finally arrived with Thrym’s bride, Thrym could not contain himself. “I have more gold and jewels than anyone could want,” he said. “The number of my cattle, oxen and horses are limitless. There is more silver in my treasury than can be counted, but now I have the one thing that has always escaped me—Freyja.”

Thrym ushered Loki and his bride into the great hall that was made ready for the wedding and was filled with the finest food and drink. He led the bride to a seat next to his at the head of a great table. All the guests around the table were watching the couple with envy. Loki took a seat on the other side of Thor. Thor was very hungry and could not contain himself. Without revealing his face to Thrym, he devoured an entire ox, eight salmon and then proceeded to try every dish on the table. He washed all this down with three horns of mead.

Thrym was amazed at the sight of his bride devouring such a great feast. “I have never seen anyone with such a hunger,” he said. “And I have never known a woman to eat with such abandonment.”

“When Freyja learned that she would be your bride, she could not eat,” Loki quickly said. “She refused to touch either food or drink until she could be by your side.”

Thrym was so moved by Loki’s explanation that he could not resist stealing a kiss, but when he leaned over and gently lifted the veil that covered her eyes, he was so startled at the fierce pair of eyes that glazed back at him that he jumped back in shock.

“Her eyes burn like two pieces of coal,” he said. “Why do her eyes burn so?”

“They burn with the passion that she feels towards you,” Loki shrewdly said. “She struggles to contain herself. She does very much want to marry you.”

“Then we will waste no more time,” Thrym said. “Bring the hammer here! It’s time that the bride be hallowed, and our vows exchanged in the name of Var.”

Mjollnir was brought into the hall by an army of Thrym’s servants, and they placed the hammer on the bride’s knees. Thor could not contained himself when he saw his hammer, and as soon as the hammer was placed on his knees, he snatched it up and threw off his disguise. Everyone in the hall sprang to their feet at the shock of discovering that Thor the Hurler was before them.

Thor roared with anger and his eyes now burned white hot with rage. He raised his hammer and with one mighty swing and brought it down on Thrym’s head, crushing his skull into a million pieces. He then turned on the assembled guests in the hall and proceeded to dispatch each and everyone one of the giants. He showed no mercy to either giant or giantess. By the time he was done, every giant in Thrym’s hall was dead, and Thor had his hammer securely back in possession once more. Chaos among the sexes had been destroyed and the natural order of the sexes had been restored.

## **XII: THOR AND HRUNGNIR:**

The Father of the Gods, Odin, was not content with watching the events of the nine worlds playing themselves out from his throne in Asgard. Even though his wisdom and knowledge of all things were unequaled, he craved action. Sitting and watching obviously bored him. He needed to feel the wind against his face and feel the thunder of his steed’s hooves under him. So one day, when Thor was away battling trolls and werewolves in the Iron Woods, Odin donned his golden helmet and clutched his spear in his hand and then leaped on his eight-legged steed, Sleipnir, and raced out of Asgard and over the rainbow bridge.

Sleipnir carried Odin across the river Thund, whose waters thundered passed Valhalla and then passed out of Asgard through a narrow canyon. Down the river banks Sleipnir raced as his eight legs galloped faster than the wind. For many hours Odin rode his steed, following the river that took him to the land of the giants. The Father of the Gods rode Sleipnir across the wide, open flat and dreary plains that were dotted with putrid lakes and twisted trees that divided Asgard and Jotunheim. The landscape was now covered with gray slabs of stones where nothing grew. The air was stale and filled with ash, but still Odin rode on. Eventually the land grew dark with the smoke of fires that burned beneath the earth, and whose flames bellowed black clouds into the air. But still Odin rode on until he finally reached Jotunheim. Once within the realm of the giants, Odin made

straight for the hall belonging to the giant known as Hrungrnir, renowned as the strongest of all giants.

Hrungrnir saw the rider approaching and tried to make out who he was. He could see that the rider was draped in a dark blue cloak and wore a winged, golden helmet. When the rider reached the giant, he raised his hand and called out to him.

“What is the name of the rider who dares to enter the domain of Hrungrnir?”

Odin pulled his cloak away and lift his head and said nothing.

“I saw you coming from far away and could see that you did not try to conceal your approach,” Hrungrnir said. “The steed that carries you is an amazing horse. He rides faster than the wind can race across the sky and his hooves barely touch the ground.”

“This is the finest horse in all the nine worlds,” Odin said. “There is none in Jotunheim that can compare with his breed.”

“That’s just your opinion,” Hrungrnir said.

“That is a known fact,” Odin said.

“What could a little man like yourself know of Jotunheim?” the giant said, his voice revealing his growing displeasure. “Can you be so sure of your boast?”

“Sure enough to wager my head on it,” Odin said.

“You are a fool to make such a wager,” Hrungrnir said. “Have you never heard of the horse named Gold Mane?”

“Who is Gold Mane?” said Odin.

“Gold Mane is the name of my horse!” shouted Hrungrnir. “And there is no horse in all the nine worlds that can match his speed. He is even faster than your Sleipnir.”

“Nonsense!” Odin said. “Nothing but boast.”

“Boast, you dare say!” Hrungrnir roared. “I’ll accept your wager that my Gold Mane leaves your eight-legged dog in his dust.”

“That’s a wager that I will accept,” Odin said as he pulled on Sleipnir’s reins.

Hrungrnir leaped on his horse and raced away along side Odin on his steed. The two of them sped across the land, over hills and across the barren plains. Neither God nor giant gained the advantage as they raced on. No matter what type of terrain they crossed, they remained head and head. Nineteen rivers they crossed and over cutting mountains and through dense forests they sped on like the wind. Hrungrnir was so involved in the race itself that he did not notice that they had left Jotunheim far behind and had finally crossed the borders into Asgard. It was only after he realized that he had crossed into the land of the Gods, did it finally dawn on him that he was racing against Odin himself. When he

looked to his side to see if his assumption was true, he discovered that Odin was gone. When he looked forward once more, he saw Odin waiting for him beside Valgrind, the outer gate of Valhalla.

When Hrungrnir finally rode up to Odin, the Father of the Gods laughed. "That's a mighty fine horse you got there," he said.

Hrungrnir scowled at Odin. But he was too angry to speak.

"After such a race, you and your steed must be thirsty," Odin said. "Let your horse drink his fill from the river, while we go into Valhalla and have a drink."

Odin led Hrungrnir into Valhalla. They passed through the great entrance. His two wolves, Freki and Geri leaved in joy at the sight of their master. Countless legions of warriors were feasting and drinking within the golden hall, refreshing themselves after the day's slaughter. When they saw the Father of Battle, they shouted with welcome. The noise was so great that it shook the rafters of Valhalla and sounded like all the mountains in all the nine worlds were crashing down.

Odin raised his hand and the shouting slowly died down. "I come with a guest," he said. "Hrungrnir comes unarmed to this hall, so let no one raise a weapon against him. He may come to drink and then leave in peace. So is the will of Odin."

"And what am I to drink?" Hrungrnir said. "I don't have a horn to drink from."

With a word from Odin, the Valkyries, Axe Time and Raging appeared in the hall, carrying two massive horns. They were the horns that Thor often drank from, and were both filled with rich, golden ale. The Valkyries handed them to Odin and Hrungrnir.

"Come and drink with me," Odin said.

Hrungrnir took the first horn and drank it down as everyone in the hall watched. When he was done, Odin handed him the second horn and he finished it just as quickly. Soon the giant felt the effects of all that ale. Then, without warning, he shouted. "I will!"

Odin looked at him with his one good eye. "You will what?" Odin asked.

Hrungrnir stared at Odin and glared at him. Standing upright with his chest puffed out, he said, "I will pick up this hall and carry it home with me to Jotunheim."

The hall exploded into laughter at Hrungrnir's boast. The giant turned to face the multitude, but he lost his balance and fell over. This only caused the warriors to laugh all the more.

Hrungrnir's anger only got worst. "I'll shmash Asgard into a billion pieces," he tried to say.

Odin did not react. His face remained stone-like. "If you smash Asgard, what will become of us?"

"I will kill all you damn Gods!" Hrungrnir barely said as he slammed his fist down on the top of a long table, sending it into the air and crashing down on him.

Now the laughter was so thunderous that it seemed that Ragnarok itself was upon them.

Hrungrnir pushed the table off himself and tried to stand. "I'll kill you all, except for the two of you," he said as he pointed to Freyja and Sif. "I'll take you both back to Jotunheim and put you to good use. If you know what I mean?"

Odin nodded to Freyja, who walked right up to the giant. As she walked toward the giant, the jewels on her necklace sparkled in a thousand shade of color. The giant tried to protect his eyes from the twinkling lights. Freyja then poured Hrungrnir another drink. "Have another drink," she said.

"I'll think all da ale in dis here hall. I'll schow you," he barely said as he raised the horn and began drinking once more. When the giant had finished, he remained conscious, to Freyja's surprise and continued to boast and unleash a storm of insults on everyone present. Odin and all the Gods and warriors in Valhalla soon grew weary of the drunken giant, and Odin sent a messenger to the Ironwoods to find Thor and summon him back to Asgard.

When Thor finally returned to Asgard he could not contain his rage. He was even more angry than when Loki had cut off Sif's hair. He burst in Valhalla swinging his hammer. "By all the Gods in Asgard and all the elves in Alfheim, what is this giant doing drinking in the Hall of Heroes?"

Hrungrnir looked at Thor, but he was too drunk to be frightened.

"By what right do you have to drink here?" Thor demanded to know. "And why is Freyja waiting on you?"

Hrungrnir waved at Odin. "He. He invited me to jrink here," he barely was able to say in his drunken state.

"Odin might have invited you in, but you will not find it so easy to escape," Thor said as he raised his hammer over his head and was about to slam it down on the giant's head.

"Kill me if you can," Hrungrnir said. "But what kind of songs will they sing in your honor when they tell the tale of how Thor killed a giant who had too much to jrink and was unarmed? If you do kill me, then all the nine worlds will know that the mighty Thor is actually a coward." Hrungrnir hiccuped. He was not so drunk that he forgot the code of honor of the Gods. Thor lowered his hammer and growled in anger at Hrungrnir's logic. But Hrungrnir knew that he was still

not safe. Thor would wait until the giant sobered before killing him. He had to think fast.

“If you dare to fight me when I’m not so drunk, then I will challenge you to a duel.”

Thor agreed to the duel and Hrungrnir told Thor to meet him at the Stone Fence House in Grjotunagardar.

The giants gathered at Grjotunagardar long before their appointment with the Gods. Thor and Hrungrnir had agreed that each could be accompanied by a squire. There was a river at Grjotunagardar with a bed made of clay.

“The clay of this riverbed is of the finest found anywhere in the nine worlds,” Hrungrnir said to the other giants. “If we dredge it and collect enough clay, we can fashion it into a squire that is so big, even Thor will quake before the sight of it.”

The other giants thought it a good plan and they began dredging the clay. They worked all day and through the night piling the clay as high as a mountain. They quickly set to work fashioning it into the image of a giant that towered nine leagues high and three leagues across its chest from armpit to armpit.

“I can’t see his head,” One of the giants said.

“That’s because it’s hidden in the clouds,” another said.

“But he is still only made of clay,” Hrungrnir said. “We have got to give it a heart.”

The giants were unable to find a heart big enough for the giant, to give it life. They finally decided on the heart of a giant mare. When they put the heart in the clay giant, its pumping was enough to breathe life into it. They discovered that the giant was so big that it was unsteady on its feet, but it would have to do. They named the giant, Mist Calf or Mokerkialfi, and ordered it to wait at Grjotunagardar.

When the appointed day finally arrive, Hrungrnir made for the Stone Fence House. Though Mist Calf was made of clay and possessed a mare’s heart, Hrungrnir was a Stone Giant and his heart was as hard and sharp as stone. His bravery raised the morale of the other giants. Hrungrnir head, as well as the rest of him was as hard as the hardest stone, as was his shield. He held a huge hone and waited for Thor to arrive, unafraid. He was a terrible sight to behold.

Thor was anxious to do battle with Hrungrnir. He leaped into his chariot. Thialfi jumped into the chariot behind him and the two raced away from Thrudvang and out of Asgard. His goats’ hooves pounded the earth as they pulled the God of Thunder behind them. Lightning flashed and thunder rolled in the sky as Thor



sped toward Grjotunagardar. Terrible storms rose in all nine worlds, causing mountains to shake, and the earth to quake as Thor continued on his journey. His fury seemed unbound and his lust for battle could not be satisfied until he had erased the insult of the Stone Giant.

When Thor finally arrived at Grjotunagardar, he pulled on the reins and brought his chariot to a halt. Thialfi jumped out of the chariot and raced to where the giants were waiting for Thor. When he saw Mist Calf towering over head, and Hrungrnir standing at its feet, he shouted at the giant.

“There is no use hiding!” Thialfi shouted. “Thor can see you hiding behind your raised shield. Put it down and face the Mighty Thor!”

“Hrungrnir lowered his shield and raised his hone. He was ready for the God of Thunder and saw that Thor raised his hammer and swing it about his head and then fling it directly at him.

Hrungrnir threw his hone with all his strength. His aim was perfect and his hone hit Mjollnir head on. But there was no weapon that could match Thor’s powerful hammer, and Mjollnir smashed Hrungrnir’s hone into a million pieces. The collision was so deafening that its flash was blinding and the crack echoed throughout the nine worlds.

The shrapnel scattered, sending a hailstorm of deadly fragments in every direction. One large piece flew directly at Thor and was lodged in his head. Thor was badly wounded and flew out of his chariot from the force of the impact. Blood poured out of his head in rivers, but Thor’s throw was true and his hammer hit its mark. Mjollnir struck Hrungrnir directly on his forehead, shattering his skull and sending a blossom of gray material and blood into the air. The lifeless giant fell directly on Thor. The Thunder God was pinned under one of his massive legs.

Mist Calf watched the battle and was terrified. He lost control of himself and urinated uncontrollably all over himself. Thialfi flew at Mist Calf, swinging his axe, he began hacking at the clay giant’s legs. The clay giant panicked and was too weak to fight back. In no time his legs were cut out beneath him and he fell over. The crash was so terrible that it caused all of Jotunheim to quake.

Once the clay squire was disposed of, Thialfi rushed to his master’s side.

“My head,” Thor growled.

Thialfi inspected the injury. “Your head is injured, but it’s still in far better shape than Hrungrnir’s head,” Thialfi said. He then tried to lift the leg of the dead giant off Thor, but he lacked the strength.

“Go and get help,” Thor ordered.

Thialfi raced away as fast as the wind, until he had reached Asgard. No one could run faster than Thialfi and when he reached Gladsheim, he informed the Gods of Thor's victory. The Gods were pleased, but when they heard of his plight, they rushed to Grjotunagadar. One after another the Gods tried to lift the leg off Thor, but none had the strength to raise it, not even Odin. Then, finally, Magni, Thor's son, who was the last to arrive, stepped forward. His mother was the giantess, Jarnsaxa and he was reputed to be the strongest of all the Gods, even stronger than his renown father.

"Let me try," Magni declared. He grasped Hrungrir's foot and with all his strength raised the stone leg and swung it off his father.

All the Gods and Goddesses shouted with joy.

"I'm sorry that I did not come with you," Magni said, "for I would have killed this giant with my bare hands."

Thor clasped his iron gloved hands on his son's shoulders and smiled into his eyes. "If you continue to grow as you are growing, in no time you will be strong enough to kill all the giants with your bare hands."

"I am the son of my mother, Iron Cutlass, and my father, Thunder himself," Magni said.

"I will reward you with Gold Mane as a gift," Thor said to this son. "Take Hrungrir's horse as a trophy."

Odin objected to such a fine mane being turned over to the son of a giantess, but Thor ignored his father and gave the horse to his son. None of the other Gods objected and were pleased that the giants were defeated, and Asgard was safe again. With the defeat of Hrungrir by Thor, the long conflict between the giants and the Gods had finally turned in the favor of the Gods. The giants realized that Hrungrir was their strongest champion and with his defeat, the giants would never defeat the Gods.

Thor clasped his hand over his wounded head and rode back to Asgard in his chariot.

### **XIII: GROA, THE SYBIL:**

When Thor returned to Asgard, he went to Thrudvang and entered his great hall, Bilskirnir. The stone was still lodged in his head and despite the loving efforts of his wife, Sif, they could not remove it. Sif decided to call for the greatest sorceress in Midgard, Groa, the wife of Aurvandil the Brave. Her name meant green-making, and was known for her healing skills. Upon receiving Sif's message, she

quickly made her way to Asgard with all hast. No one in the nine worlds could match her skill and knowledge in healing spells, charms and incantations.

Once she reached Bilskirnir, she went right to work, singing rune-spells over Thor. Thor could feel the stone loosening, and the hammering pain in his head fading. He was so grateful that he wished to reward the enchantress.

“I have a surprise for you,” Thor said to Groa.

“A surprise? What could there be that would surprise me?” Groa asked.

“I will tell you,” Thor said. “The last time I was in the north, I met your long-lost husband, Aurvandil the Brave.”

Groa stopped chanting with the mention of her husband’s name.

“He was still alive when I found him, though gravely injure,” Thor continued. “I put him in a basket and carried him out of Jotunheim. We crossed the venomous river known as, Elivagar.”

“If you brought him back from Jotunheim, then where is he?” asked Groa, refusing to believe Thor.

“Proof, is it?” Thor said as he laughed.

“Yes,” Groa said.

“You have sung your runic incantations all night, but we will take a break so that I might show you your proof,” Thor said, and then led the sybil outside so they might look into the sky. “Look!” Thor commanded. He pointed to the sky. “See that wondrous star? Have you ever seen it before?”

Groa had to admit that she had not.

Thor smiled at the enchantress. “Aurvandil was very ill, but he did survive the journey from Jotunheim. He is resting until he recovers from his injuries. One of his toes had stuck out of the basket and broke off from frostbit. I took the toe and placed it in the nightly heavens as a tribute to his bravery. From this day forth, that star will be known as Aurvandil’ Toe.”

Groa’s heart almost burst with joy as the news that Thor told her.

“Now that you know,” Thor said, “that your husband will soon be coming home, you can finish your spells to remove this stone from my head.”

But Groa was too overcome with the good news that Thor told her. Hard as she tried, she could not remember the rest of the healing spells. All she could think of was the return of her beloved husband. Thor ordered her to try and concentrate, but her love for her husband drove out all thoughts of her skills and knowledge of healing. She pleaded with Thor to forgive her, but as angry as Thor was, he could not punish such a woman who loved her husband so greatly. Thor finally sent her home and the stone remained lodged in his head.

The stone lodged in Thor's head was a reminder that sometimes one had to make sacrifices to defend what is right and honorable. If one wanted to preserve their way of life, their honor and the integrity of their home, family and nation, then one must be willing to accept that sacrifices must be made.

## **XIV: THOR AND GEIRROD:**

Loki was bored with Asgard and desired to travel to Jotunheim. He approached Frigga and asked her to lend him her falcon skin. Frigga agreed and sent her maidservant, Fulla, to fetch the coat of feathers. Loki took the falcon skin and cloak himself in it. Loki leered by both Frigga and Fulla. "How easy it's to win your powers of transformation with just a simple smile," Loki said and then flew off in the guise of a falcon, flying around the hall, Fensalir and then out the door.

Loki flew directly toward the land of the giants. He flew across the river Iving, and beyond, until he finally came across well-kept fields that were ringed by walls made from silver and gray stones. He saw a great hall and made directly for it, swooping into a large, open window, and settling on the window ledge inside it.

The Sky Traveler could see a huge giant in the hall, but he was not alone. With him were two daughters. They were enjoying a great feast.

The giant, whose name was Geirrod, leaned back after finishing off a dozen roasted cattle and rubbed his stomach. When he looked up, he noticed for the first time the falcon sitting on the window ledge high over head.

"That's the finest looking falcon I've ever saw," he said. "I must have it. Catch the bird and bring it to me."

Loki heard the giant's orders and he hopped out of the window to the top of the outer wall. One of Geirrod's servants had tried to reach for him, but Loki had escaped just in time. He laughed to himself and decided to have some fun with the servants.

When Geirrod's servant climbed up onto the window ledge, he reached out to grab Loki, but the Sky Traveler was too swift and hopped to the other side of the roof and settled down near the chimney. He screeched mockingly at the servant, who had climbed up to the roof after him. Loki was not concern and decided to wait until the servant was inches away from him before he flew off, hopping the servant would lose his footing and fall off the roof.

As the servant reached out once more to grab Loki, the Trickster flapped his wings and tried to fly away, but when he did, he discovered that he could not move. His feet were fixed to the thatch roof like branches on the tree. Loki knew that he had been tricked by an even greater trickster than himself. The servant's

fingers closed around him and Loki was brought into the hall and presented to Geirrod.

Geirrod was pleased with the bird. "I'll bound and train this hawk to become the best hunted in Jotunheim. Give the bird to me so that I might examine it."

His servant did as he was told and Geirrod held the hawk and looked it over very carefully. He could see its eyes and noticed the red and green light in them.

"This is no hawk!" Geirrod shouted to his daughters, Gjalp and Greip. "This is some being in disguise. I can tell by its eyes. They do not the eyes of a hawk." The giant squeezed the bird gently. "Who are you?" he demanded. "Tell me who you are!"

But Loki said nothing.

Geirrod squeezed the bird even harder. Loki could feel the giant's grip tighten, but still he chose to remain silent.

"You still won't talk?" Geirrod said. "Well, we'll see if you will talk when you are hungry." Geirrod rose and walked over to a huge chest near the wall of the hall. He opened it and placed the hawk in it and then slammed the lid down and locked it.

For three months he did not open the chest. Loki remained inside the chest without food and water. He sat in the darkness, refusing to speak. The air grew stale and the darkness oppressive. Loki was very sorry for himself. He was now so weak from hunger and thirst that he could not call out even if he wanted to. Then, after three months, Geirrod opened the chest and took the bird out and looked at it. "Well? Are you hungry enough to speak?"

The hawk blinked and look about.

"Still not hungry enough?" Geirrod said, and he was about to place the hawk back into the chest.

"Loki," the hawk finally said.

"So, you can speak," Geirrod said. "And you are Loki. How nice." He tightened his grip and smiled at the hawk.

Loki wanted to escape and fly out of the hall, but the giant's grip was much to firm for him to try.

"Tell me, Loki," Geirrod said. "Do you want to live?"

Loki nodded his head yes.

"Good, then we can make a bargain," Geirrod said. "I'll spare your life if you swear to bring Thor to my hall without his hammer or his belt of strength. That is what you must do if you want to live."

At first Loki said nothing, but when Geirrod tightened his grip once again, Loki spoke up and swore to do as Geirrod demanded. He would trick Thor to

come to his hall without his hammer and belt of strength. Satisfied, Geirrod released Loki and let him eat and drink his fill. When Loki was finished, he scowled at Geirrod and his two daughters, and then, without wasting any more time, he flapped his wings and flew out of the hall and back to Asgard as fast as he could.

Despite their difference, Thor and Loki often traveled together through the nine worlds. One day they were out traveling in the mountainous regions to the east of Asgard. Thor had not taken his hammer or girdle of strength. Loki asked Thor if he would like to meet a giant who told him he admired Thor a great deal? Loki said that his name was Geirrod, and that he had two very beautiful daughters who also admired him very much. Thor suspected nothing, and agreed, though he wanted to return to Asgard and fetch his hammer and belt.

“There’s no time for that,” Loki said. “You’re not afraid of a giant?”

“Afraid of a giant?” Thor said. “How far is Geirrod’s castle?”

“Far,” Loki said, “but we can stay overnight at the home of a giantess by the name of Grid. She is a friend to the Gods and her door is always open for visitors from Asgard. Odin and Vidar were both among her guests, and they both had nothing but wonderful things to say about her—hospitality.” Loki raised his eye brows and smiled.

Thor agreed and the two of them walked all day and into the night, crossing the rivers, Iving and Grid, and then finally came to her hall.

Grid welcomed them both and set a wonderful supper for them. Both Thor and Loki ate their fill, and afterwards, Loki spread straw on the floor and fell fast asleep. As Loki slept, the expressions of his face continued to change, from grim to joy, and back to grim again. Grid watched the Master of Lies as he slept. She could read his dream-signs on his face and knew that Loki was up to no good.

After she made sure Loki was deep in sleep, Grid approached Thor. “Now that Loki is asleep, let me warn you about Geirrod,” Grid said.

Thor had too much to drink and found it difficult to listen to the giantess.

“Listen to me!” Grid insisted, and shook Thor until he gave her his full attention. “Geirrod hates the Gods, especially you, Thor. You killed his dear friend, Hrungrnir, and he’s sworn to take his vengeance against you.”

“He plans to kill me?” Thor asked in disbelief.

“Yes!” Grid said. “That’s exactly what I’m trying to tell you, so listen carefully to what I have to say.”

Thor nodded that he understood and listened carefully to Grid.

“Geirrod is a very cunning giant,” Grid said. “He won’t try to defeat you through confrontation. He’ll invite you into his hall, but you can be sure that he’ll have some spell-craft to dispose of you with. You should not go without your hammer and belt of strength.”

“If I turn back now, I will be considered a coward and dishonored,” Thor said.

“If you must go, then I will not let you go unarmed,” Grid said. “You can take my weapons.” Grid presented Thor with her own belt of strength, her pair of iron gloves and her unbreakable staff, which possessed great power.

Thor took the weapons and thanked her, and then fell asleep.

In the morning, Thor and Loki thanked Grid and set out on their way to Geirrod’s hall. Loki noticed Thor’s new weapons, but he did not ask him about them. He wondered what Grid might have said to Thor during the night. Thor also wondered just how much Loki really knew about Geirrod.

After walking all morning, Thor and Loki came upon a vast river of torrent waters and menstrual blood, known as Vimur. Great rocks lined the banks of the river and even sharper stones lied everywhere on the floor of the river.

Thor tightened his belt of strength and then put on his iron gloves. He told Loki to hold onto his neck. Thor then grasped Grid’s staff and using it to support him. He began wading across the rushing river. He had trouble keeping his balance, as currents of water slammed into him. He fought not to slip on the sharp rocks on the riverbed, as dogfish continuously bit at his ankles. Before long, Thor was up to his waist in water and Loki was having trouble hanging on to Thor.

By the time the two Gods had reached the halfway point of the river, the waters were slashing over Thor’s head. Thor cursed and growled, but he refused to surrender to the river’s currents. “Try as hard as you can,” Thor cursed the river, “but you will not stop Thor from crossing your width. If you raise your waters, I will rise even higher, even if I must stretch as high as heaven itself!”

When Thor stopped to rest, he noticed a giantess on the far side of the river. She was Gjalp, one of Geirrod’s daughters, and she was standing astride the onrushing river. He noticed that the torrent of water and blood was streaming from her, causing the river to rise.

Thor’s eyes squinted as he watched the giantess. He reached below the waters until he grasped a huge boulder. When he had the rock securely in his hand, he raised it over his head and shouted. “This river of death must be damned at its source!” He slung the rock with all his strength directly at Gjalp. His aim was true and the rock hit her right between her eyes, causing her to fall back, howling in pain. She raised herself and fled back to her father’s hall.

But it was too late, for Thor had lost his footing. The currents swept him and Loki down river. Loki clung to Thor as he struggled to regain his footing. It was then that he noticed a rowan tree growing out of the river bed. He grasped its branches and used it to help him regain his footing. He was able to pull himself along the tree until he was in shallow water. Thor and Loki were finally able to reach the far bank of the river.

“If not for the rowan tree, we would have succumbed to the river,” Thor said. “I will not forget the rowan tree’s assistance against the evil spells of sorceress and witches.” From that day forth, the rowan tree, sometimes known as the mountain ash, was forever known as Thor’s Salvation.

After they recovered, Thor and Loki continued their journey. They finally reached Geirrod’s hall late in the afternoon. When they knocked on the door, they were greeted by a servant who was clearly expecting them. Geirrod was nowhere to be found, and so the servant showed them to sleeping areas that were prepared for them. Since the two Gods were tired from their long journey, they readily accepted.

The servant led them through the hall and out the back door. He finally brought them to an old, rank, goat hut. Rotten and filthy the straw was piled inside for them to sleep on, and only one chair to sit on. Thor was ready to strike down the servant for the obvious insult, but he controlled his temper. He thought it better to wait until he finally met Geirrod himself, and take his revenge out on him personally.

Loki decided to go down to a stream that ran past Geirrod’s hall to wash. Thor sat in the chair holding Grid’s staff. Sleep got the better of him and he soon dozed off.

Thor began dreaming that he was crossing the river, Vimur again. The waters of the river were pushing him along until he was lifted by its currents and floated away. When Thor opened his eyes, he discovered the reason for his dream. He found himself floating upward toward the roof of the hut. Thor gripped the staff with both hands and rammed it into the roof with all his strength. Instead of pushing the staff through the roof, he pushed himself back down, crashing to the floor.

Thor looked under the chair to discover what was causing it to rise. He found Geirrod’s two daughters, Gjalp and Greip. They were dead. They had been hiding under the chair and began lifting it to the ceiling in the hope of crushing Thor, after he fell asleep. But Thor’s weight was too great, and his strength was even greater. When he pushed the chair down, it had crushed the life out of the two giantesses. They laid dead on the floor of the hut. Their backs were broken



and they had died in agony. Thor noticed how ugly they were and remembered that Loki had told him they were beautiful.

Loki had returned from his swim, but no sooner had he returned, he and Thor heard Geirrod's servant calling to come with him to the hall. He told them that Geirrod was waiting for Thor and wanted to challenge him to a "game of two."

Thor was pleased. He put on Grid's belt of strength and the iron gloves she gave him, and immediately made his way to the hall. Once inside, Thor was amazed to discover a row of furnaces along both sides of the walls of the hall. The heat generated from the furnaces made it much too hot for comfort inside the hall. Thor wondered about the fire, and thought of the Surtur and his sons. He wondered about Loki, who also was a fire-giant. Thor could see Geirrod waiting for him at the far end of the hall. The doors behind him and Loki closed and Geirrod began walking through the hall, toward them with his arms outstretched before him.

But Geirrod was not welcoming Thor to his hall. Instead, he grabbed a large ball of red-hot iron between tongs and threw it directly at Thor.

Thor dropped his staff and with the help of his iron gloves, he was able to catch the red-hot ball of iron with ease. Everyone in the hall panicked and jumped under the tables. Thor said nothing as he held the ball. His eyes flashed white-hot, and his teeth were clenched with anger. Geirrod saw Thor's anger and it frightened him. The giant tried to hide behind one of the hall's iron pillars.

Thor raised the smoldering ball in his right hand. Taking one step forward, he flung the ball with all his strength down the hall. The ball flew with such force and speed that it crashed right through the iron pillar, and smashed completely through Geirrod's torso, causing him to fall dead. The ball continued to fly, crashing through the wall and then punctured the side of a hill in the distance, and disappearing deep into the earth.

Thor now raised Grid's staff and began swinging. He did not stop until every giant and giantess in Geirrod's hall was dead. No one noticed Loki sneaking out of the hall while Thor dispatched the giants. Thor did not stop when everyone was dead. He proceeded the smash Geirrod's hall and did not stop until it was reduced to a mountain of rubble. Forever more the mountain stood as a monument of Thor's victory over the giants.

When Thor was finished, he looked about and discovered that Loki had fled. He realized that everything Loki had told him about Geirrod and his two "beautiful" daughters were lies. He vowed that he would get revenge for trick that the lying Loki had played on him. Thor was no longer blinded to Loki's true nature. He saw him for what he truly was—the harbinger of the destruction of the Gods.

## XV: HARBARD THE GRAY-BEARD:

Thor decided to travel. He began walking, out of Asgard into the wilderness. After a long time he found himself in the northern wilderness. Great mountains loomed up like the bones of dead giants. The mountains were huge and stony and blocked out the northern sun that laid low in the sky.

Thor continued his journey, passing out of the mountain range and into the icy tundra. The vast, flat and windswept frozen earth of the tundra seemed to stretch into infinity. Finally, Thor came to a sound with a deep channel filled with icy waters. Blue and deadly cold, the waters seemed not to move, as if the sea itself was lifeless. There were no winds this far north, and the world seemed void of all life that is except for a lone figure on the far side of the channel.

Thor strained to see to the other side. He could make out the figure of a ferryman, with a long, gray beard, standing in the mid day sun on a flat-bottomed boat.

“You there!” Thor called out, causing the water to quiver. “If you are a ferryman, then come to me, for I need your services!”

The figure on the far side stirred and stood up. He cupped his hands and shouted back. “Who are you, Oaf! And why do you shout to me?”

“I want you to ferry me across this channel!” Thor shouted back. “I will pay you well! I have some of the best food prepared and cooked in all the nine worlds. Herring and porridge I carry and I had more than my fill, and still I have enough that will keep you fed for years!”

The ferryman stood up and pulled his wide-rim hat down over his face. “Do not be in too much of a rush to return home,” he said. “Don’t be so high and mighty, for even the highest can be knocked down by grief, and you will find nothing but pain and grief when you arrive home, for your mother is no longer among the living.”

“My mother dead!” Thor cried. “How could that be? What grief could be worst?” Thor was visibly shaken by the ferryman’s pronouncement.

The ferryman took no notice of Thor’s shock and immediately began insulting him. “Look at yourself. You travel without shoes and you dress like a beggar. I doubt if you even have a house to call home.”

Thor ignored the insults and called for the ferryman to bring his boat across the channel. But the ferryman ignored Thor and even turned his back on him.

“Is that your boat, or does it belong to someone else?” Thor asked.

“It belongs to Hildolf, the slaughtering wolf. He has entrusted it to me. There is no one wiser. Rathsey, the Isle of Counsel is where he lives. Strict orders he has

given me; take no horse thieves, or pilferers across in this boat. This boat was meant to ferry only the great and powerful. Let the thralls and peasants find other means to cross this channel. Before I can ferry you across, I must know your name and discover if you are worthy.”

“I am Thor, the Thunderer, son of Odin, brother of Meili and father to Magni,” Thor said. “I am the strongest of the Gods and the defender of Asgard and Midgard.” Thor’s words caused the surface of the channel to ripple with waves that raced across to the other side and wash against the side of the ferryman’s boat. “Now tell me your name.”

“I have no need to hide my identity,” the ferryman said. “My name is Harbard, which means graybeard.”

“You make a point of letting me know that you do not hide your identity,” Thor said. “Do you have something to hide?”

“If I did, I would not try to hide it from the likes of you,” Harbard said.

Thor pulled on his red beard as he watched the surface of the water. “I would not waste my time getting wet by wading across the channel to teach you lessons in good manners. But when I do get on the other side, you had better make sure that I do not find you, for if I do, then I will repay your insolence.”

With his hands on his hips, Harbard threw his head back and laughed at Thor’s threat. “Here I am and I will not set one foot from this place. If you want to repay me, then come around, but I warn you, you have not met my equal since you fought Hrungrnir.”

“You know of my fight with Hrungrnir?” Thor asked. “Well, as big as he was, and even though his head was made of stone, I still beat him and killed him in the end. What were you doing when I sent Hrungrnir to his grave?”

“Five winters I spent with Fjolvar on the island of Algron. We wage war in its most terrible form, sinking our staffs in heroes as well as in virgins. No one escaped our wrath.”

Thor thought once more about what Harbard told him. “And how did you fare with the women?”

“They were glad to surrender themselves to us,” Harbard said. “But they had no other choice, for they could not escape us any more than they could make rope from sand. And they gave themselves to me first. Seven sisters willingly gave themselves to me at once, and what ecstasy they could give? And what about you, Thor? What were you doing?”

“I killed the giant Thiazi, and then I flung the eyes of Alvaldi’s son into the heavens, where they still hang as stars. They bear witness to my greatness. And did you do, Harbard?”

"I called all the witches together and we conjured love craft," Harbard said. "And I received from the giant, Hlebard a magic branch after I beat him in a contest of wits."

"Is that how you repay a generosity?" Thor asked.

Harbard shrugged and shouted across the channel. "Each man must do what is necessary to win in the game of life, just as the mighty oak will take what nourishment it needs from its surroundings to grow. But Thor, what did you do?"

"I invaded Jotunheim and put to death as many giants and giant women as possible. In this way I saved Midgard from their plans to invade the land of men. And you, Greybeard, what were you doing?"

"I caused war to erupt in Valland, the land of slaughter. I set princes against each and put an end to peace."

Thor listened and thought about the words that the ferryman spoke.

"After they fell in battle, they were welcomed into Odin's hall, Valhalla, and this made Odin happy," the ferry man said and then smiled. "But you, Thor, all you care for are the concerns of thralls."

"Not thralls, but the common, hard-working folk," Thor said. "I am even-handed in the affairs of both men and Gods, unlike you."

"That is because, while your limbs are as strong as steel, your heart is as soft as down," jeered Harbard. "You can't help but let fear overcome you, and it caused you to crawl into the thumb of a glove. So frozen with fear, you hid like a child under his bed."

"You womanish ferryman," Thor said. "If not for this channel of water that separates us, I'd send you off to Hel."

"Why?" Harbard asked. "What quarrel do we have? But Thor, what did you do next?"

"When I was in the east," Thor said, "I found the sons of Svarang on the banks of the Iving." Thor then picked up a boulder ten times his size, and flung it effortlessly across the channel. Harbard stepped aside as the boulder passed by him, and it buried itself deep into the hill behind him. "They threw boulders like that, at me," Thor said. "But it did them little good. They were soon begging me to forgive them. And you, Harbard, what were you doing?"

"I also was in the east, but I met a linen-white maid and won her heart. We met in secret and she surrendered herself to me. I held her down and enjoyed her natural gifts," Harbard said.

"A fortunate man, you were," Thor said.

"I could have done with your help to hold the lady down," Harbard said.

"I wish I could have been there," Thor said.

“Perhaps,” Harbard said, “But I doubt if I could have trusted you, for I know of your reputation for breaking oaths.”

“Never!” Thor shouted. “That is a lie.”

“But what were you doing, Thor?” the ferryman asked,

“I was on Hlesey, the island that belonged to the sea God,” Thor said. “There I slew the she-devils. Serpent-like they were, and fit to be the brides of Berserkers.”

“You have brought shame on you head, Thor,” Harbard said. “You now boast of killing women. Is that how you got your reputation as a ‘lady killer?’”

“They were maids, but were-creatures—more wolf than human,” Thor protested. “Like waves in a stormy sea, they attacked my ship with iron clubs. But what were you doing, Harbard?”

“I raised an army on the frontier of Asgard,” Harbard said.

“But did you lead it to defend Asgard, or to attack Asgard?” Thor asked.

“Don’t fret, Thor,” Harbard laughed. “To calm your fears, I will give you a little ring as a token of my desire for peace.”

Thor was livid with rage. He kicked and stumped. He gripped Mjollnir in his fist and waved it about his head, as if he was getting ready to throw it. “You are the foulest creature ever, and your foulness is only surpassed by your insults,” Thor said.

“If they are foul, it is because they were taught to me by old men who lived in the hills of home,” Harbard said.

“Hills of home?” Thor said. “A fine name for barrows.”

“That’s the name I gave them,” Harbard said. “There are no one wiser or possessing sharper tongues than the dead who have lived long and are well experienced.”

“And their sharpness of tongue that you have learned so well, will be the death of you yet,” Thor said. “If ever I reach your side of the channel, I will make you howl louder than the biggest wolf whom I might hit with my hammer.”

Harbard changed the subject. “And who is your fair wife, Sif, entertaining when you are away? You should conserve your strength for when you must deal with her lover.”

“Lout! Fool!” Thor roared. His beard bristled red with fire and his flashed hot like fire. “Shut your lying mouth or I’ll shut it for you!”

The ferryman stood, leaning on his staff. His one eye peered out from under the wide brim of his hat. “You had better hurry home, Thor. Oh, but you are running late, because you were not able to cross this channel on my boat. What a pity.”

“You kept me waiting,” Thor shouted. “Your womanish antics delayed me.” Thor was now pacing up and down like a caged animal. His fury was building until he could not contain it any longer. Thunder and lightning flashed and rumbled, but the ferryman just stood and watched the Thunder God. “I never thought a mere ferryman could best the strongest and bravest of the Gods. If you know what’s good for you, you had better row your boat to me and ferry me across.”

“Go away!” Harbard shouted. “I will not ferry you across.”

Thor stood by the water’s edge. He could see his reflection in the mirror-like surface of the channel. He realized that the wit of the ferryman had bested the brute force of Asathor. Brute force alone was not enough to deal with one’s adversary. One had to have the wit and cunning mind of a fox combined with the furious nature of a wolf to provide the best defense. “If you will not ferry me across, at least direct me as to the best way around this channel.”

“Take the way to your left. Toward Midgard it will lead you,” Harbard said. “Once in Midgard, you will find your mother and she will show you the fastest way to Asgard.”

“How long will it take me to return home?” asked Thor.

“If you walk fast and don’t rest, you will make it home before sunrise,” Harbard said.

“We’ve talked long enough,” Thor said. “It’s time I go on my way.” Thor then turned and left. He could hear the belittling laughter of the ferry man in his ears as he departed.

Harbard is clearly Odin, and the story of Harbard is not a tale between father and son, but of a long-forgotten time when Odin replaced Thor as the leader of the Gods. The story is also a lesson that brute force alone is often not enough to win a struggle. Most of the time one should rely on cunning and wisdom. This is what is meant by having a well-planned strategy. The story also explores the different natures of the two Gods. Odin is the God of princes and kings, traditionally, which meant the leaders of nations, empires and communities. But with leadership comes cunning and guile. I am reminded of Machiavelli’s, *The Prince*, in which he describes two types of leaders—a fox and a lion. The former rules by guile and cunning while the latter rules through fear and brute force. But Machiavelli suggests that the most effective leader is one who is both fox and lion. The nature of Odin is very different from that of Thor. When dealing with Odin—beware! He is bound by no oath other than that which he has made to himself. But Thor is much more trustworthy. He is bound by the oath that is made on his hammer. Those who are very ambitious will seek Odin’s favor, but

they must chance his mercurial nature. These men would do anything for power and would have remained at the channel with the ferryman. But they can never be sure if he will decide to betray them, and cause them to die and join him in Valhalla. But men who live purely according to honor and loyalty will most likely have followed Thor when he left the channel.

## **XVI: THE WORSHIP OF THOR:**

Of all the Gods, along with Odin, Thor is the best known and most beloved. Most people would rather call on Thor than any other God, and for good reason—Thor is not only the most trust-worthy, he is the natural defender of our Folk and the protector of an ordered and healthy society. He is the champion of both Midgard and Asgard, and for that reason, he is the natural defender and protector of our Folk. Two titles that rightfully belong to him are; Friend of men and Midgard's Warder.

Thor is worshiped as a warrior and protector, but he is much more. His nature embodies the three-nature of all Indo-European societies; warrior, high priest and farmer. His hammer is an instrument of health, growth and fertility. It is used to hallow field and crops, and today it should be used to hallow all of our endeavors, but it is also used to hallow new-born children and ceremonies and events.

When speaking to Odin, it is always good to use some form of ritual, but with Thor, you can speak to him without ritual or ceremony. Thor is a straight-talker, and you can ask him for his protection with resorting to ritual. He can be spoke to at any time and any where. This is why we give the sign of the hammer, evoking his protection, and can be done at any time and any where. The simplest sacrifice that one can make to the Gods, and especially to Thor, is simply making the sign of the hammer at meal time. By making the hammer-sign you are hallowing, or blessing the food and drink. The act of eating a meat is transformed into a sacrifice to the Gods because you are giving nourishment to your body, and since the Gods dwell within each of us, nourishing the body is also nourishing the Gods. This is why it is important to take care of one's body and don't eat and drink excessively or ingest toxic substances. The Christian concept that your body is a temple is actually borrowed from the old pagan beliefs.

Many of the attributes attributed to Christ are actually stolen from Thor. Thor is known as the fisherman, and his power to protect and heal should be used to help restore and build our Folk community anew. Thor caught Loki when he turned himself into a salmon and he went fishing for the Midgard Serpent. Therefore, his role as a fisherman is to heal and protect the Folk commu-

nity from harm and draw our people back to the fold of their ancestral Folk Faith.

Thor plays the role of restorer of order. He not only can cause storm, but he can calm them. He brings the gentle rains that nourishes the land and quiets the seas. Thor's powers should be used to help us to build a healthy, ordered and fertile new community that will survive the coming chaos. The world as we know it is entering the great winter of Ragnarok. Death and destruction lies ahead for our world. When Western civilization finally collapses into chaos, death and destruction will reign over the entire world. If our Folk is to survive, it is imperative that we seek Thor's help, for his is the role of monster-fighter. He battles monsters and giants that represent the destructive forces of chaos. Only with Thor's help can we survive the long winter of Ragnarok that is now upon us.

One time of the year when Thor should be remembered and celebrated is at Yule-time. This is his principal holiday. It is customary to burn a large log in his honor, which is known today as the Yule log. The log should be of oak, his sacred tree. The burning Yule-log is a symbol of bringing light into the darkness of winter, and it is an emblem of Thor's protection of the Folk through the long, hard winter of Ragnarok.

Thursday is Thor's special day and red is his color. Red is considered the color of love and passion.



# 7

## *TYR: THE GOD OF WAR AND JUSTICE*

### **I: GOD OF WAR AND JUSTICE:**

Men prayed to Tyr for victory in battle, and justice in peace. He is renowned for his wisdom as well as his valor. Tuesday is named in his honor. In some places he was called Tiwaz and was associated with the Roman God, Mars, the Celtic God, Nadu, as well as the Indian God, Mitra. Tyr was the original God of war, and the precursor of Odin, much in the same way that Mars was the God of war in Rome, and once held a higher place than Jupiter. Because this was true for both the Latin-Italic and Germanic-Norse peoples, this transformation of Tyr-Mars must have happened long before our ancestors split from their ancestral homeland and spread across the face of Europe. Tyr is known as the one-handed God. He is the personification of self-sacrifice for a greater good. He is also the God of honor, who kept his word, even though it meant the loss of his right hand. There are also parallels between Tyr and the one-handed Celtic God, Nadu, as well as the Indian God, Mitra, the just God of the day. This adds proof that this tale has its roots far in our ancestral past.

The name Tiwaz is also related to the Roman God, Jupiter, and the Greek God, Zeus. All three names are descended from Dyaus Piter or Father Dyaus, and all are descended from the name Dieus, which is the ancient Aryan or Indo-European word for God. It is translated as The Shining Heaven and The Light of Day. A helmet was found in Negau in Austria, which bears an inscription in ancient North Italic (Second Century B. C.) and is translated as Teiwa, which is an archaic form of Tyr's name.

The Romans associated Tyr with their God of war, Mars. The Romans bestowed on Mars the title, Mars Thingsus, which is associated with the Thing or Assembly of the people. It was in the Thing or Assembly of the people that law and justice was dealt within both ancient Rome and among the Germanic peo-

ples of northern Europe. So Mars, who is one of the founding trinity of Gods of Rome, was like Tyr, the God of the Assembly, Justice and Law. Warriors and soldiers should remember to call on him in their prayers. When a man does something heroic that elevates him above his comrades, he is referred to as “as brave as Tyr.” But Tyr is also wise, and a wise man is sometimes referred to as being “as wise as Tyr.” He is also a man of his word, and all three attributes are seen in the tale of Fenrir Wolf. He has been given such titles as the One-Handed God, the Fosterer of the Wolf, the God of Battles, and the Son of Odin.

Tyr is considered one of the oldest of the Gods. His name can be traced back to the original Indo-European Sky Father *Dyēus*, the Shining One. He has been associated with Dyaus, Zeus and Jove. It’s believed he once held the top position among the ancient pantheon, but lost his position to Odin.

There are many places in Europe that were named in his honor. They are considered places of strength. Tyr was worshiped at these locates. Some of them are; Zierberg in Bavaria; Zierenberg and Diensberg in Hesse; Tisdorf and Tisvelae in Saxe-Weimar; Tystahe and Tuslunde in Jutland; Tisvelae in Zealand; Tistad, Tisby, Tisjoe and Tyved in Sweden; Tuesley (Surrey), Tisfield, Great Twe, Duns Tew (Oxfordshire), Tewin (Herts) and Dewerstone Cliff on Dartmoor in England. Strangely, there are no name places in Tyr’s honor in Iceland and only one in Norway on the island of Tysnes in South Hordaland, which was considered a sanctuary. The replacement of Tyr by Odin can be considered the transformation of that Regal-quality that elevates that part of the essence of the All-Father to the top of the pantheon of Gods. As the world changed, and our people evolved throughout Europe, the Odin-essence grew stronger within the All-Father than the Tyr-essence.

Tyr is the God of martial honor and holds one of the twelve seats in Gladshheim. He ranks next to Odin and Thor because he is the God of War, and his name is sometimes evoked along with Odin when a warriors goes into battle. He is always welcomed in Valhalla and Vingolf. Tuesday is named in his honor and druids or Gothi of the ancient North offered human sacrifices (always captured prisoners of war) to Tyr. This was as barbaric as it might some. The sacrifices were actually executions of prisoners of war, but because they were warriors who were captured in battle, they were killed in the name of Tyr so that their spirits might be taken by Tyr to Valhalla. This was done by the white-armed Valkyries who he commanded, in Odin’s name, to fetch warriors and often decided which ones were worthy to reside in Valhalla.

Tyr is synonymous with bravery and the law. The story of his sacrificing his right hand to Fenrir so that the Gods might bound him, is representative of the

truth that we, as citizens, must make sacrifices concerning our right so that a just and orderly society might be maintained. Tyr is the truth that citizens also have duties and responsibilities, as well as right. Like Odin who gave up his eye for a greater good of wisdom, so too did Tyr surrender his hand for the greater good of social order.

## **II: LOKI'S BREW AND THE FETTERING OF FENRIR:**

Loki's androgynous nature not only produced the horse known as Sleipnir, but three terrible monsters. Losing interest in his wife, Sigyn, Loki took to Jotunheim to seek sexual gratification. He was able to satisfy his lust with a giantess by the name of Angrboda (Distress-bringer). Loki and Angrboda produced three children from their illicit union. The eldest was the wolf Fenrir; the second child was Jormungand, known also as the Midgard Serpent, and the greatest of all wereworms; and the third child was a daughter by the name of Hel. At first gain, Hel might be mistaken for a beautiful Goddess. From the waist up, she appeared beautiful, but upon closer examination, one would discover that from the waist down, she was dead. The flesh of the lower part of her body was grayish-green and was in a state of advance decay. Her face seemed frozen in a gloomy and grim expression. When news of the birth of Loki's brew reached Asgard, the Gods become concerned. They held a council meeting at the Well of Urd and discussed the implication of the three monsters. When they asked the three Norns their opinion, they could only warn them of the potential for evil that Loki's children were capable of.

"The mother of the three beasts is evil," Urd said, "but their father is far worse."

"There is none who can equal the black nature of Loki," Verdandi said.

"You can expect no good from them," Skuld said. "Loki's brew are destined to cause nothing by harm to the Gods of Asgard. The danger they represent is far greater than you can image. They are not like the other giants and monsters that can easily be tamed by Thor's mighty hammer. Their evil is much deadly, for they are the venomous extension of the enemy from within your domain, the enemy that will corrupt and destroy the essence of the Gods."

The Norns' warnings caused the Gods to agree on a course of action. They hastily made plans for Loki's three children. A troop of Gods set out for Jotunheim. They stormed Angrboda's castle and overcame her. She was bound and

gagged so as not to warn her three children. Her children were captured before they could react, and they were taken back to Asgard by the Gods.

Odin had thought long and hard on what to do with Loki's children. He immediately grabbed Jormungand and flung him into the ocean that surrounded Midgard. The serpent sunk to the bottom of the ocean, where he lived and grew. And how he grew! The were-worm continued to grow until his coils encircled the entire globe of Midgard, so that he was able to bite his own tail. Until the end of time, all mankind must struggle with the crippling effects of Jormungand's entangling coils.

Odin was just as sure about what to do with Loki's daughter. He did not hesitate to send her off to inhabit the darkness regions of Niflheim. Odin decreed that she would establish for herself a domain for the dead. All who died of illness or old age would be sent to her domain, which was named after her. She was ordered to care for those who came to her domain, and carry out whatever sentence that the All-Father had decreed for each individual who entered her realm.

Hel did as she was ordered. She immediately set about building her realm. A vast and huge wall was raised about her realm, located behind the sheer rock known as the Drop to Destruction. She took up residence in a terrible hall that she built and named it Eljudnir, the Home of the Dead. A great gate was built to protect the entrance to her domain. She took to servants, a male by the name of Ganglati (Tardy) and a female by the name of Ganglot (Tardy). They were given these names because they moved so slowly that it seemed that they were not moving at all. She possessed a plate that was called Hunger and a knife that was named Famine. Her bed was the Sick Bed, and the draping about her bed were known as Glimmering Misfortune.

Of all Loki's children, Fenrir seemed the least terrifying. At first, Fenrir appeared to be no different from any other wolf, but looks often are deceiving, and this was true of Fenrir. As with his father, the Gods did not perceive the true nature of Fenrir, and Odin thought it best to permit Fenrir to live within Asgard. He was permitted to roam about the green fields and golden hills of Asgard without restriction. But in time, Fenrir grew larger and more terrible. To keep him from causing mischief as his appetite grew, it was agreed that the Gods would feed him. Of all the Gods, only Tyr was brave enough to face Fenrir alone. The job of feeding the wolf fell on Tyr. Tyr would feed the wolf great joints and the wolf would devour the joint, meat, bone and gristle.

The Gods kept an eye on Fenrir as he continued to grow. Finally, the three Norns, Urd, Verdandi and Skuld once again warned the Gods of the danger that Fenrir represented. This time they told the Gods that Fenrir would be the cause

of Odin's death. This propelled the Gods to take some kind of action against the wolf. But since they were forbidden to kill him, and so long as he continued to live on the sacred ground of Asgard. They had to come up with a way to contain him. It was decided that they would somehow fetter him. The Gods fashioned a great chain of iron, which they called Laeding. They took the chain to Fenrir and asked him if he thought he was strong enough to break it?

Fenrir looked the chain over. "As strong as this chain might be, I am far stronger," Fenrir said. He let the Gods bound him in the chain. They winded it about him until he could not move.

When they were finished, Fenrir told them to watch what he could do. He planted his four paws squarely on the ground, took a deep breath and then flexed his muscles. Instantly, the iron links burst apart and Fenrir was free. The Gods were almost knocked off their feet.

Alarmed at Fenrir's strength, the Gods set out to fashion another chain. The second chain was called Dormi, and it was twice as large and far stronger than Laeding. They brought the chain to Fenrir and told him that they did not think he was strong enough to break it. He would have to be the strongest of all who lived within the nine worlds to break such a powerful chain.

Fenrir examined this chain, as he did Laeding. He could see that it was stronger than Laeding, but he knew that he had also grown stronger since he snapped Laeding. "I will prove that I am the strongest," Fenrir said. "One cannot win fame unless one takes risks." He then let the Gods bind him with Dromi, fastening it around his body, legs and neck.

When the Gods were satisfied that they had finally bound Fenrir, they stepped back to watch what the wolf would do next. Fenrir flexed his muscles, but the chain held fast. The Gods were pleased. But the wolf was not finished. Fenrir struggled to break the chain. He began rolling about the ground, howling. He rose to his feet and once again planted his paws deep into the earth. He summoned every ounce of strength he possessed, and strained against the chain. The links began to clink until finally, the chain burst apart, shattering into hundreds of pieces. The Gods were shook at Fenrir's strength.

The Gods were now frightened. They feared that they would not find any chain strong enough to bind the wolf.

"Is there any chain strong enough to contain Fenrir?" asked Thor.

"If there is, it will be made by the dwarfs," Odin said. "No one can surpass their skill with the smith-craft." Odin sent Frey's messenger, Skirnir, to Svartalfheim, the realm of the dwarfs. Skirnir set out immediately and soon entered the subterranean land of the dwarfs. He stood before the great dwarf-lords; Nar and

Nain, Niping and Dain, Bifur and Bafur, Bombor and Nori and thousands of others, each more terrible looking than the last. He told them of the Gods' dilemma and promised them more gold than they could imagine, if they could find a way of binding Fenrir. Dwarfs could imagine a great deal of gold. The lust for gold burnt the hottest in the hearts of dwarfs, and so they were moved to set out and fashion a chain strong enough to fetter Fenrir. The dwarfs set to work and finally fashioned a chain, as thin and smooth as silk ribbon. They called it Gleipnir and gave it to Skirnir.

Skirnir quickly returned to Asgard, but when he presented Gleipnir to the Gods, they were amazed.

"It's so thin and smooth," Odin said as he examined Gleipnir. "What is it made of?"

"Six times the dwarfs forged it in their furnaces," Skirnir. "They fashioned it out of the sound that a cat makes when it moves; out of a woman's beard; from the roots of a mountain; with the sinews of a bear; from a fish's breath and with the spittle from a bird."

The Gods were still doubtful that such a thin sliver of a ribbon could possibly contain Fenrir.

"I also doubted it when the dwarfs first gave it to me," Skirnir said. "But remember the skill and magic with which the dwarfs can forge on their smiths. Have you ever wondered why a cat makes no noise when it moves, or why a woman grows no beard? The reason the mountains have no roots or a fish has no breath is simple. These things, which we can find no trace of, simply exist within the safekeeping of the dwarfs. It is a wise man who knows that the strongest things in the world are those that often cannot be seen, but felt just the same."

The Gods understood Skirnir's wisdom. It would take more than material bounds to contain the evil that existed within Fenrir. It would take those things that exist within one's heart and mind—honor, loyalty, purity and faith.

So the Gods took Gleipnir and presented it to Fenrir. This time they invited him to join them on the island known as Lyngvi, in the middle of the Lake Amsvartnir.

Once on the island, the God showed Fenrir, Gleipnir. They challenged him to test his strength once more.

"It is a little stronger than it might appear," said Frey.

"You should be able to break this slight ribbon," said Skirnir.

Fenrir examined the ribbon and then turned to the Gods. "Why should I even bother? This ribbon is not worth my time or effort." He then looked at Gleipnir once more and sniffed it. "But if it is stronger than it appears, that would mean

magic went into its construction. In that case, I'm not going to let you wrap it about me."

"You twice ripped apart iron chains, but you won't even try your strength against this ribbon?" Thor said.

"But you needn't worry," Frey said. "If you fail to break free of this ribbon, we promise to release you."

Fenrir's lips curled back, revealing his teeth. "If you do fetter me and I fail to break free, I doubt if you will ever release me," he said. "I can smell your fear of me. It's true that I don't want to be bound by this ribbon," he then looked at the Gods, "but I don't want you to think that I'm frightened of your little ribbon. I'll test my strength against your ribbon, but to make sure you keep your promise to release me if I fail, one of you will have to place your hand in my mouth as a token of your good faith."

At first none of the Gods spoke. Each looked at the other without saying a word. Finally, Tyr stepped forward. Without speaking, he walked right up to Fenrir and placed his right hand in the wolf's jaws.

"I will place my hand in your mouth as a sign of good faith," Tyr said.

Fenrir said nothing. His red eyes examined the great God and then he grasped Tyr's right hand with his jaws.

Fenrir remained motionless as the Gods quickly set about binding Fenrir with Gleipnir. Once he was completely bound, the wolf began to struggle. He flexed his muscles and began to shake, but the harder he fought against the ribbon, the tighter the ribbon fastened about him. When he finally gave up, the Gods began laughing, but Fenrir did not protest. He clasped his jaws down as hard as he could on Tyr's hand, biting it off. For ever more, the wrist has been known as the "wolf-joint," and the right hand is considered the sacrifice hand with which one swears an oath.

The Gods fixed the end of Gleipnir to a large chain known as Gelgja, which was already fastened through the hole in a huge boulder known as Gjoll. The Gods then drove Gjoll a mile deep into the ground. They took the huge rock known as Thviti, and placed it upon Gjoll to secure it. As hard as Fenrir shook and struggled to free himself, he could not. He howled and growled and snapped at the Gods, but one of the Gods took a sword and placed it between his yawning jaws. In this way, the wolf was gagged and bound. So much saliva poured from his mouth that it formed a river that flowed into the Lake Amsvartnir, and was known as Von, the river of Expectation.

So all three of Loki's children were dealt with. The Midgard Serpent struggled at the bottom of the sea, its coils causing terrible hardships for the men of Midg-

ard, trying to break their spirits, while his brother, Fenrir was bound and gagged in Asgard, waiting for the day when he would break free. Their sister, Hel, remained mistress of the realm of the dead, where she too waits to play her part in refusing to release the son of Odin from her domain of death.

### III: HYMIR'S CAULDRON:

Food was plentiful in Asgard, but there was a shortage of good ale and mead. So when the Gods sat down to feast, they discovered that the more they ate, the less they felt like eating, because they had nothing to wash the food down with.

The Gods turned to the runes to help them discover a solution to their dilemma. They slaughtered a small animal and dipped twigs with runes on them into the sacred blood. They then cast the runes, and the runes told the Gods to seek out Aegir. With Aegir, they would find an answer to their problem. So a group of Gods and Goddesses set out to visit Aegir, who lived near an island named Hlsey. They found Aegir and his wife, Ran, living in a great hall beneath the waves that washed up on the shores of the island.

The Gods found Aegir living comfortably in his hall, but Thor put an end to his peaceful existence. Thor looked Aegir in the eye and ordered him to brew some ale for the Gods. "Brew some ale, and make sure there is enough to last the Gods of Asgard an eternity," Thor said.

Aegir was not pleased by Thor's insulting order. He considered how he could repay the Thunderer for his insulting behavior.

"I will brew you all the ale Asgard needs," Aegir said. "But first, you must bring me a cauldron large enough for the task."

The Gods and Goddesses said nothing. They knew that no such cauldron that large existed in Asgard. Nor did they know of where such a large cauldron existed. But Tyr did, and he spoke up. "I know where such a cauldron is," Tyr said. "The giant, Hymir, who lives far to the east, beyond the stormy waves of the Elivagar, has such a cauldron. It measures five miles deep."

"Will he give it to us," Thor asked.

"No, but I believe we can take it from him," Tyr said. "But we have to be cunning. We will have to go and visit him, but do not tell him your true identity. Call yourself Veur when you meet him."

So it was agreed that Thor and Tyr would set out to pay Hymir a visit. They traveled as fast as they could. They made first for the farmer, Egil, in whose car Thor had left his goats, Tanngnost Tooth Grinder and Tanngrisni Gat Tooth. After a quick meal the two Gods set out once more. They traveled east until they



reached the river, Elivagar. After crossing the stormy waters of Elivagar, they continued eastward until they reach the ends of the world and there they found Hymir's hall. It stood high on a mountain.

They were greeted by Hymir's wife, a giantess with nine hundred heads. But she possessed great magic and transformed herself into a beautiful woman with pale, white skin. She wore a gold necklace and armbands. She welcomed them and brought them each a goblet of golden ale. "I know why you are here," she said. "Giant blood feeds my powers, so listen to me when I tell you to hide beneath one of the cauldrons. My husband is coming and he is often rude with guests."

Thor did not like the idea of hiding, but Tyr reminded him that they had better resort to cunning than brute force. So Thor agreed to do as the giantess suggested. They hid and waited until the ugly Hymir entered the hall. He had just returned from hunting. Icicles were hanging from his great beard.

The giantess welcomed her husband. "Greeting, Hymir!" she said. "Cheer up and be happy, for we have two very important guests. One of them is Tyr himself, and with him is Veur, the friend of men and the foe of Hrod." Hymir's wife tried to melt her husband's icy heart with her words. "Look and see for yourself," she said. "They sit under the great cauldron."

Hymir saw the two Gods sitting on a bench, under one of the great cauldrons. There were nine cauldrons in all hanging from a great gable. Hymir glared at the gable, and his stare caused the beam to break, sending eight of the cauldrons to crash to the floor. The only one that did not fall, was the one the two Gods were sitting under.

The two Gods rose and walked toward Hymir. The giant stared at the two Gods, hoping the power of his gaze would cause them to tremble. But when he saw the sworn enemy of Hrod, it was he who trembled. He could not understand why he trembled so, and decided to offer his guests his hospitality. He called to his servants to bring food and drink. Three oxen were slaughtered and cooked in the one remaining cauldron. When the meal was cooked, Thor astonished his host by eating two whole oxen by himself.

The next day Hymir looked at Thor and studied him. He suspected that Veur was not who he appeared to be.

"You have eaten well," Hymir said. "If we want to eat today, then we should go hunting."

"Why don't we go fishing?" Veur suggested. "I know I can make a good catch of fish. All I'll need from you, Hymir, is bait."

Hymir pointed to his pasture. "My herd is grazing in the field. Go and find yourself the bait that you'll need, giant killer."

Thor stared at Hymir for a second after hearing him refer to him as a giant killer. He then marched out to the pasture and found himself a fine black ox by the name of Himinhrjot, the Heaven Bellower. Thor grabbed the ox's horns and ripped them apart. He then broke the beast's neck.

Hymir was not pleased with the death of another of his oxen.

Hymir and Thor next left the hall and together went down to the sea. They launched Hymir's boat and Thor began rowing the ships' oars until they were far out to sea. Soon Hymir took over the rowing. Hymir, rowed out to the middle of the great ocean until they were over its deepest point.

Thor urge Hymir to row even further, Hymir refused. The giant prepared his tackle and flung it overboard. Almost at once his lines began pulling. When Hymir pulled them in, he discovered he had caught himself two of the largest whales.

Thor had prepared his tackle, as he sat in the stern of the boat. He baited his hook with the head of the ox, Heaven Bellower. Casting it far out to sea, it sang deep into the dark waters.

When the ox's head reached the bottom of the ocean, it was spotted by Jormungand, the Midgard Serpent. The serpent released his tail and grabbed at the bait.

Thor's line pulled, but Thor's mighty arms held fast to the line. The ocean began to lash as huge waves rose and fell. The waters froth and bellowed as Jormungand tossed and turned under the dark waters, trying to break the line, but no matter how hard he tried, he could not break free of Thor's hold.

Thor began hauling the Midgard Serpent to the surface of the ocean. His powerful arms strained as he hauled in the line. He finally pulled the dragon's head over the gunwale of the ship and held by the line in its mouth with one hand. With his other hand, he took out his hammer and whirled it about, preparing to dispatch the most powerful death blow it could deliver. Thor fixed his flaming eyes on the poisonous glare of the sea serpent. He was about to bring his hammer down upon the head of the were-worm, when Hymir, who trembled in terror at the sight of Jormungand, cut the line and set the sea serpent free.

Jormungand twisted and turned and plunged back under the tumbling waters. Thor shouted in anger and flung his hammer at the escaping worm, but the hammer only hit the waves and then returned back to the hand of the Thunder God.

Shaken and frightened, Hymir began rowing back to shore as fast as he could. He did not stop until the ship had reached the shore of Jotunheim. When they had reached dry land, Hymir stepped out of the ship and turned to Thor.

“We have enough work for both of us,” he said. “Pull the boat securely onto the shore and I’ll carry the two whales that I caught back to my hall.”

Without saying a word, Thor did as the giant said, and hauled the boat on shore. He lifted the boat in his hands high over head until all the bilge water had poured out of it. But Thor did not set the boat down, and proceeded to carry it, with the two whales still inside it, back to Hymir’s hall.

When Thor and Hymir returned to Hymir’s hall, they found Hymir’s wife and Tyr waiting for them. They marveled at Thor’s strength, but Hymir bragged that he had bettered Thor in fishing. This angered Thor, but Hymir ignored his anger and challenged Thor to another contest.

“You’re a fair oarsman,” Hymir said, “but so are many other men. If you are truly a powerfully strong hero, than you should be able to smash this simple glass goblet?”

Thor took the goblet and flung it at the main stone pillar supporting the hall’s gable. There was heard a terrible crash. Stone and brick flew about, and smoke filled the hall. One of Hymir’s servants rushed to the pile of rubble and picked through it until he found the glass goblet. He brought it back to Hymir. The goblet was unbroken.

Hymir’s wife bent over and whispered into Thor’s ear. “Throw it again, but this time, aim it at Hymir’s head. He eats so much that his head is harder than the strongest diamond.”

Thor took the goblet once more from Hymir, and walked away from him. He soon stopped and turned to face the giant. Then, with all his strength, he flung the goblet straight at the giant’s head. The goblet struck the giant’s forehead, and while Hymir’s skull remained unbroken, the glass goblet shattered into two halves.

Hymir reached down and pick-up the two halves of the goblet. Holding them in his hands, he stared at them. Then he looked up at Thor. “With the breaking of this goblet, you have broken more than just a piece of glass. How fragile is one’s pride. You have best me, and therefore, you have the right to take from me whatever you want.”

Without waiting for Thor to speak, Tyr leaped up and took Hymir’s last cauldron.

“Ah! You chose my cauldron,” Hymir said. “Never again will I be able to say, ‘Brew for me cauldron, cauldron, brew me ale!’”

But when Tyr tried to haul the cauldron off, he discovered he could not move it. Hymir only smiled.

Tyr struggled with the cauldron, but as hard as he tried, he could not move it.

Now Thor decided to try. He grabbed the cauldron by its rim and with feet firmly planted on the floor, he flexed his muscles and slowly hoisted the cauldron onto his shoulders and carried it out of the hall.

Thor and Tyr had not gone very far when they heard a terrible noise coming from Hymir's hall. They turned to have a last look, and saw a horde of multi-headed giants rushing out of the hall, charging straight for them. Thor eased the cauldron from his shoulders and set it on the ground. He then took Mjollnir from his belt and began swinging his hammer over his head. The hammer flew from his hand and struck each giant, one after another, until not one giant remained standing or alive. After all the giants were dead, Thor's hammer returned to his hand and the Thunder God put it back in his belt. He then hauled the cauldron onto his shoulders once more, and he and Tyr began to make their way back to Asgard.

When they had finally reached Asgard, all the Gods and Goddesses gathered to examine the great cauldron that the two Gods had brought back from the land of the giants. They were all amazed and pleased and cheered Thor and Tyr as their saviors.

The cauldron was delivered to Aegir, who proceeded to brew ale and mead, the life-blood of the Gods, so that the Gods would have plenty of good drink to sustain them through the many winters that lied between then and Ragnarok.

It's clear from this story that the cauldron is the vessel, the Folk, in which the life-blood of the Gods and their children, the Folk, resides. Aegir is the primordial sea from which all life sprang. He is the gene pool of life and he brews the life-blood that sustains us. It is up to Thor and Tyr to ensure the well being and preservation of the life-blood of our Folk. Thor (power and protection) along with Tyr (war and law), together were able to replenish the gene pool or life-blood. They were successful in securing the cauldron, in which the life-blood is produced, from Hymir, the force of destruction and de-volution.

When Hymir and Thor went fishing, Thor was able to secure and contain the destructive forces of the world represented by the Midgard Serpent. At the moment of his triumph, he was defeated because of the corrupting interference of Hymir (de-volution). But Thor proves he did not need Hymir. He brought the boat and the catch of two whales back to the hall by himself. This is meant to tell us that we do not need the Hymir presence among us. We can accomplish great

feats by ourselves and need not depend on the assistance of that which is alien and uncomparable to the Folk. The cauldron that Thor and Tyr finally brought back to Asgard, for Aegir to brew everlasting drink, is the same cauldron in which the blood of Balder is brewed into a new beginning—a rebirth of the life-blood of our Folk.

# 8

## *BRAGI: THE GOD OF POETRY AND ELOCUTION*

### **I: THE ESSENCE OF THE UNION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH:**

After the war between the Aesir and the Vanir, all the Gods and Goddesses joined together to iron out the peace terms. They ensure the union between the two races of Gods, each Aesir and Vanir spat into a great jar. To ensure that the peace would last, the jar was removed and magic spells were cast over it. The saliva was the essence of both the masculine heavenly forces of the Aesir and the feminine forces of the earth were united in form. Out of the jar was born a new man, who was born of the essence of both the Aesir and the Vanir.

This man was so very beautiful. His name was Kvasir and he possessed great wisdom and knowledge of all the mysteries in the nine worlds since the beginning of time. Wherever he went, he never refused to answer any question, put to him, spreading wisdom throughout the nine worlds. And when he entered a realm or kingdom, everyone ceased whatever they were doing to come and listen to him. Everyone wanted to hear what he had to say.

When Kvasir spoke the words sailed through the air like music on the wind. His voice never failed to enchant anyone who listened to him. He spoke in poetry, which was the voice of the essence of the union of the Aesir and the Vanir—heaven and earth. Kvasir answered the most complex question with the simplest of answers. Whenever anyone asked him his opinion on any subject, he would never insist, but rather made suggestions on the best course of action. It was common for him to answer a question with a question. It did not matter if it was a man, dwarf, giant or God who asked him a question, he always made them feel that they had been helped to answer their own questions.

Not everyone loved Kvasir, the essence of heaven and earth, and his goodness. The forces of darkness hated Kvasir, and none hated him more than a very unpleasant pair of dwarf-brothers by the names of Fjalar and Galar. Kvasir interested them, but because of their black natures, their interests soon turned to envy. They were jealous of his wisdom, goodness and gentle nature. Being dwarfs, they craved what they could not have and soon began to conspiracy against Kvasir. An invitation was sent by the dwarf brothers, requesting Kvasir to come and visit them in their dark cave. Never one to refuse an invitation, Kvasir joyfully accepted. He never refused to bring what joy and assistance to whatever creature was in need of his insight.

The dwarfs welcomed Kvasir with a great feast and a large gathering of fellow dwarfs, as was their custom. Everything was done to make Kvasir welcomed. Long tables made of solid gold, were covered with the best foods and drinks. The caverns were lit with golden lights and the stalactites that hung from the ceilings sparkled, and veins of multicolored ores shined in the walls. Everywhere the dwarfs exchanged tales of business and the talk was about profit and petty revenge.

After the feast, Fjalar and Galar request a private meeting with Kvasir. Kvasir agreed and followed the brothers into another cave. Once inside and out of sight of the other dwarfs, the two brothers turned on Kvasir. They grabbed two clubs and proceeded to hit him over the head until he was knocked out cold. The brothers then grabbed Kvasir and hung him up by his feet like a cow being butchered. The dwarfs drew two long knives and after waking him from his unconsciousness, they slit his throat. Kvasir's eyes bulged as he tried to cry out, but couldn't. He could feel his life poured out of him, as he slowly died. The dwarfs grabbed several jars that were stored in the chamber, and began filling them with Kvasir blood as it poured from his throat. Every last drop was caught in two jars named Son (expiation or truth) and Bodn (offering or prayer). Kvasir's heart finally stopped pumping and his body turned white.

The dwarfs then fetched a cauldron called Odrorir (inspiration or furiously roaring) and poured Kvasir's blood into it. They then mixed the blood the life-force, with the riches and purest honey they could find. They understood honey's special qualities. It is made from flower pollen that flows up to the heavens. After reciting several dark spells over the brew, it turned into the most sublime mead. It had the power to bestow upon whoever drank from it, the power of a poet and the ability to sing was a charm which could melt even the hardest and coldest hearts. The dwarfs hid the mead and guarded it against anyone who might try and steal it from them.

When Kvasir did not return, the Gods asked about his whereabouts. The two brothers sent word that Kvasir had choked on his own brilliance and died.

On another day the dwarfs entertained the giant, Gilling and his wife. Conversation soon turned into an argument. Being spiteful and malicious they schemed to kill Gilling by asking him if he would like to go for a boat ride? When he said yes, the three of them got into a boat and rowed far out to sea. The dwarfs then rammed their boat into a submerged rock, causing Gilling to fall out. Not being able to swim, Gilling sank and drowned. The two dwarfs righted their boat and rowed back to shore. They made their way back to their home singing merrily.

When they confronted Gilling's wife, they described what happened, and told the giantess that it was an accident. Upon hearing the news, the giantess began weeping so much that she flooded the dwarf's cave. This only made them even more hateful and they thought up a scheme.

"Now, now, my dear," Fjalar said, faking concern over the giantess' grief. Perhaps it would help if you could view Gilling's body. Maybe we should row out to where he drowned and see if we can find his body?"

She nodded her yes in agreement. Fjalar then turned to his brother and whispered for him to find a millstone and wait above the entrance of the cave with it.

After the giantess composed herself, Fjalar stood up and escorted her to the door. He let her to exit firsts, and when she did Galar struck her on the head with the millstone.

The two dwarfs laughed as she laid dead on the floor.

But their crime did not go unnoticed. It was no long before the couple's failure to return to Jotunheim caused their son, Suttung, go in search of his parents. When he discovered what the two dwarfs did to his parents he was determined to avenge their deaths. He seized them by their necks Holding each one in each of his huge hands, he was about to squeeze the life out of them when they begged for their lives. He decided to drown them the way they killed his parents. He carried them down to the sea and began wading into the water and placed them on a rock jutting out of the sea. He knew they couldn't swim and would drown when the tide rose and covered the rock. Laughing at them, he turned and began to walk back to shore when the dwarfs called out to him.

"We admit our crime, but what good will killing us do?" Fjalar said.

"I will have the satisfaction of seeing you both dead," Suttung said.

"But our deaths will not bring back your parents," Galar said. "But we can make good restitution for your lost."

The giant stopped and turned around. "How?" he asked, as he stared down on the two groveling dwarfs.



Galar looked at his brother. Fjalar knew what he was about to propose and nodded his consent.

“We are in possession of a very valuable treasure,” Fjalar said. “But it will do us no good if we are dead. So, my brother and I will offer it to you for our lives.”

“What kind of treasure?” asked Suttung.

Fjalar began to describe the nature of the mead. He explained its origin and power. They could see that Suttung was impressed.

“I agree to your proposal,” the giant said.

He then picked them up and carried them back to the shore. After setting the dwarfs down, they led him to their cave. Once there, they brought out the jugs that contained the mead made from Kvasir’s blood. Suttung took the jugs and marched off, back to Jotunheim, carrying Son in one hand and Bodn in the other and Odrorir under his arm. Once back in Jotunheim, Suttung carved a new chamber out of the mountain, Hnitbjorg (the beating rock), where he lived. The mountain represents both the human body and the cosmos or world. It is the universal matter. He then called to his daughter, Gunnlod, who lived in the base of the mountain. She is the female giant force at the center of the world, as well as at the center of the human body. He ordered his daughter to keep watch over the mead.

## II: ODIN’S QUEST FOR THE MEAD:

Lacking the cunning and intelligence of the dwarfs, the giant Suttung bragged about his mead. In was only a matter of time before Odin’s two ravens, Hugin and Munin learned of Suttung’s treasure and reported it back to the All-Father. After learning of the magic qualities of the mead made from Kvasir’s blood, Odin wasted no time and set out on his quest to retrieve the mead for himself. The God of Gods, transformed himself into a giant and set out toward Jotunheim. When he reached the vast, eternal river that separated Asgard from Jotunheim, he crossed it with ease and pass through the great desert, where no grass or tree could grow. The desert came to an end at the feet of an endless curtain of mountains. He wasted no time in crossing the mountains and walked down into a narrow green valley.

Odin made straight for Suttung’s dwelling. On the way he passed through a field of tall, rich, green grass. He found nine thralls, brown and bent from the long hours working in the sun, busy cutting the grass and making hay. They were from Midgard and came to Jotunheim seeking adventure and riches, but were enslaved by the giant and forced to work in his fields. Odin watched them as they

scythed the succulent grass with long, slow sweeps. He noticed that their scythes were dull and this made him very weary.

“Who is your master?” the One-Eyed God asked.

The thralls stopped working to see who the stranger was.

“Baugi is our master,” one of them answered.

“Baugi?” asked Odin, fainting his ignorance. “Who may Baugi be?”

“He is Suttung’s brother,” the thrall said. “He has tricked us with our own greeted and forced us to work for him in his fields. He guards Suttung’s treasure. What is your name, stranger?”

“I am called Bolverk,” Odin said. “I noticed that your scythes seem dull. Would you like me to sharpen them for you?”

The thralls all readily agreed. Bolverk took a whetstone from his belt and quickly sharpened one of the thralls’ blades. The other thralls gathered around and watched as the stranger put a new edge on the scythe. When they saw how sharp it was, they all begged Bolverk to do the same for their blades. Bolverk obliged. When he had finished, all the thralls were pleased with what a fine job Bolverk had did.

“Never have our blades been this sharp,” one of the thralls said. “But we have a great deal of work still ahead of us. Look and see at the endless fields that still need to be cut. Our blades will surely become dull long before we have completed our tasks. Will you consider selling your whetstone to us?”

“I am willing to sell the whetstone, but only to one man,” Bolverk said. “I will sell it to the man who will shelter and feed me tonight in the manner in which I am accustomed.”

Everyone began promising Bolverk a feast if only he would sell the whetstone to them. Odin looked at the greedy thralls arguing among themselves and felt nothing but disgust. He flung the whetstone high into the air. It flew so high that it seem to hover in midair. The thralls began running about, hoping to catch the whetstone when it returned to earth. They ran about, jostling and pushing each other causing their blades to slit each others’ throats. All nine of the thralls were dead.

Odin caught the whetstone and placed it back in his pocket. He smiled at his handiwork and then turned and walked away. Undismayed by the events he continued his journey. When he reached Baugi’s house, he knocked on the door and entered. He told Baugi that his name was Bolverk and explained how tired he was from walking all day. He then asked Baugi if he would be kind enough to give him something to eat and drink and permit him to sleep overnight in one of his large barns.

“Any other time I would consent to your request,” Baugi said, “but this is the most unfortunate time.”

Bolverk appeared grieved and asked Baugi why he was so troubled.

“I discovered that all my farm laborers have been killed. That’s what’s what troubles me!” Baugi said as he banged his fist on a large oak table. The crash was so loud that it sounded like thunder. “All nine of my thralls have been killed. There’s no way I can find enough laborers to replace them in time to complete their work.”

“Then let me do their work in return for room and board,” said Bolvark. “You can see that I am strong enough to do the work of nine thralls. I will work all summer, but I ask for one additional compensation for my services.”

Baugi looked at Bolverk as he sized him up. “I doubt you could do the work of all nine of my thralls, but if you can, what fee do you demand?”

Bolverk smiled. “Only a single swallow of Suttung’s mead.”

Baugi shook his head in disbelief. “Why would you want such a payment?”

“Strong and powerful I may be,” Bolverk said, “but to be a poet is the highest calling for any man.”

Baugi shrugged. “Suttung’s mead means nothing to me, but my brother guards the mead jealously. I doubt if I could possibly convince him to give you even a single drop of it.”

“I will accept nothing less,” Bolverk said. “If you can’t convince your brother to part with even a single draught then there is nothing further to be said.”

Before Bolverk could leave, Baugi spoke once again.

“The best I can promise is this,” Baugi said. “I will ask my brother to permit you to take a draught of his mead.” Baugi cared little for his brother and even less for the mead, and he did not think Bolverk was strong enough to fulfill his part of the bargain. “If you work all summer and complete the work, I promise only that I will ask my brother to permit you to take a swallow of his mead, just as you requested.”

“That will be fine. If I can trust you to keep your part of the bargain,” Bolverk said.

“You’ll just have to wait and see,” Baugi said.

Bolverk agreed and then proceeded to work the green fields before the hour-glass emptied. He continued to work from sun rise to sun set, and in the summer months the north daylight lasted very long. Bolverk never tired or complained and continued to work relentlessly. Baugi was amazed and pleased at Bolverk’s progress and soon suspected that Bolverk was not what or who he seem to be.

When summer finally turned into autumn, Bolverk asked Baugi for the wages they had agreed on. Together, they traveled to Suttung's home at Hnithjorg. After Suttung welcomed his brother, Baugi told him how Bolverk had helped him after his thralls were killed. He promised he would ask Suttung if Bolverk could drink from his magic mead. But Suttung refused.

"Never will I part with even a drop of my mead," Suttung said. "I made no bargain and I don't feel obligated to give Bolverk even one swallow."

After Suttung departed, Bolverk cornered Baugi. "I hope you are not going to accept his answer as final. Considering the excellent job I did working for you all summer, you owe me enough to try and assist me in getting what should be mine."

Baugi felt compelled to assist Bolverk.

"We should try and trick Suttung in surrendering his mead," Bolverk suggested.

Baugi disagreed and felt it was impossible. But he was also afraid of Bolverk. He suspected Bolverk not to be who he was and agreed to help him. Bolverk then pulled a drill called Rati out of his belt and instructed the giant to drill a hole into the side of the mountain so that he might crawl through it.

Baugi took the drill and pressed its point to the rock surface of the mountain. With both hands he began to turn the drill. To his amazement, the drill began cutting through the rock face of the mountain with ease. Eventually Baugi stopped and told Bolverk that he had completed drilling a hole clear through the mountain. Bolverk stepped up to the hole and with all his breath he blew into it. Chips and pebbles flew out in all direction, but when the smoke cleared, Bolverk could see that the hole did not penetrate the mountain wall.

"So, you are not a man of his word," Bolverk said. "You have tried to cheat me."

Baugi said nothing. Instead he placed the drill once again into the hole and continued his drilling. He thought to himself that he would dispose of Bolverk as soon as he could. Once again Baugi claimed he had finished his task.

Bolverk stepped up to the hole once more and blew into it. This time the chips and pebbles did not fly out, but passed through into the interior of the mountain. Bolverk knew that Baugi had bored right through into Suttung's chambers. Speaking magic runes he transformed himself into a serpent and began wriggling through the hole with incredible ease. So fast did he pass through the hole that he escape Baugi's act of treachery. No sooner had the serpent disappeared into the hole, the giant had placed the blade of the drill into the hole in an attempt to kill Bolverk, but he failed.

### III: ODIN ESCAPES WITH THE MEAD:

Once Odin was inside the mountain stronghold, he turned himself back into his God-like form. Tall and handsome, he examined the great stalactite interior of the mountain cavern. He soon spied the beautiful daughter of Suttung. Gunnlod was sitting on a chair of gold, and Odin could not help be moved by her beauty. When she saw Odin, she immediately fell deeply in love with the All-Father. For three days Odin wooed her, singing to her and talking of love and passion during the day and made love to her at night. Gunnlod quickly forgot her father's orders. She could not resist Odin passionate courtship and soon consented to his desire to drink from the magic mead. She led him to where the mead was stored. He asked for three draughts of the mead and Gunnlod consented.

Odin emptied Odrorir with the first draught, and then did the same with Bodn and Son, but Odin did not swallow. He held the mead in his mouth and quickly departed from the cave. Emerging from the mountain, he transformed himself into an eagle. Flapping his wings, he rapidly rose into the sky and raced toward Asgard. But Odin's escape did not go unseen.

Suttung saw the eagle flying from his domain and immediately knew that someone had stolen his mead. He murmured magic words known only to those who have drunk from the mead, and transformed himself into a eagle even greater than the one that Odin had assumed.

Odin was still far from Asgard when he realized that he had a pursuer rapidly closing in on him from behind. Summoning all his strength, Odin began to fly faster, but the pursuer still gained on him. He was weighed down with the mead. No matter how much he strained himself, he knew that the pursuer would eventually over take him. Everyone—dwarf, man, giant and God watched the two racing eagles flying through the skies. The Gods anxiously watched Odin approaching, from the walls of Asgard. They could see the larger eagle gaining on the smaller one as they approached the walls of Asgard. The Gods collected jars and brought them to the walls. They also brought wood and piled it high and lit it, creating a great fire.

Suttung was only a wingspread behind Odin. Odin could see the fire and swooped down toward it just before the larger eagle claws reached out to grab him, but missed. Odin dived down toward the fire, but Suttung also dived after him. As Odin swooped over the walls, he spat the mead out and into the jars gathered there. Some of the mead missed the walls and fell to Midgard. It is this portion that gave men the gifts of oratory, song, and poetry. No longer carrying the mead, Odin was much lighter and was able to rise once more, avoiding the

flames beyond the wall. But Suttung was less fortunate. His greater size and weight prevented him from rising as quickly and swiftly as Odin did, and he crashed into the flames. As the flames bit and burned his feathers, Suttung cried and shrieked as he plummeted into the fires and was consumed. He had lost through cunning what he had gained through brute force.

The Gods might have lost Kvasir, but Odin was able to regain his essence due to his greater cunning and intelligence. The life-blood of the Aesir and the Vanir had been retrieved by Odin

#### **IV: THE MEANING OF THIS TALE:**

Kvasir is the culmination of the union between heaven (Aesir) and earth (Vanir). This is also the union of the spiritual and the material forces of the universe. Kvasir is the personification of the Life-Force of the Gods and thus, also man or the Children of the Gods. Kvasir is also the personification of goodness and this goodness (purity, righteousness, inspiration) is hated by the forces of darkness known as the dwarfs. The dwarfs are the lower forces, the materialistic forces, and the base instincts. They are stunted and deformed by their materialistic nature. The dwarfs hate what they can never be and thus seek both to destroy and at the same time to possess it. This is why they killed Kvasir and then transformed his blood (Life-Force) into a mead that they kept in their possession, but were unable to use.

Because the dwarfs were unable to utilize the mead made from Kvasir's blood they lost control of it to the giant Suttung. Suttung represents sorrow. This sorrow is the lost of the Life-Force that is the mead made from Kvasir's blood and honey. But Suttung gives the mead over to his daughter, Gunnlod, who lives within a mountain. This mountain represents the human body or the world. It can also represent universal matter. She is the female giant force that is within humans and is the nurturing force of motherhood. Gunnlod guards the mead in three bowls. Odin also sleeps with Gunnlod for three nights and takes three draughts. This is the Indo-European representation of the Holy Trinity that Christianity copied and incorporated into Christianity. Gunnlod sleeps with Odin and gives birth to Bragi, the God of poetry and elocution. Bragi marries Idun, the Goddess of eternal youth and vitality.

Odin leaves Asgard and traverses the eternal currents of the vast river that separates Asgard and Jotunheim. This is the eternal currents of the cosmos that separates light and darkness, the spiritual and materialistic, good and evil, creation and destruction. Odin then crosses a vast desert, the emptiness that is life without

the Gods. Odin takes the name of Bolverk (evil doer). Odin comes across nine humans in service of a giant Baugi (greed). They sort wealth and fortune in the service of a giant, which is a destructive, uncontrolled forces of nature (unrestrained avarice and greed). The result—they have lost their souls in their unrestrained and eternal pursuit of wealth. Thus, they became entrapped in the labor at the service of the giant, Baugi (greed). When Odin confronts them, they are unable to appreciate who he is and what he has to offer—liberation from their entrapped existence. The result is their own destruction through their unrestrained greed. Their greed and self-destruction is evil, and Odin as the instrument of their self-destruction is personified in his name, Bolverk (evil doer).

Odin's destruction of the nine thralls through their own greed represents Odin defeat of the death of the soul. In conquering them he gains powers and does their work for Baugi. In this way Baugi (greed) is now serving Odin, and thus, he has gained power over the personification of greed. Odin is the shaman in quest of the mead (Life-Force). He undergoes five transformations—Odin into Bolverk, Bolverk into a serpent, a serpent into Odin, Odin into an eagle and an eagle into Odin. Odin is finally able to destroy Suttung, who is the personification of the sorrow that comes from the lose of one's soul through greed. It is important not to lose one's soul (Life-Force) in the quest for wealth and success. There is nothing wrong with wanting success and wealth, but do it in the service of the greater good of the Folk and never let the lust for wealth destroy one's soul.

## **V: BRAGI—THE GOD OF MUSIC:**

Though Odin had successfully returned to Asgard with the magic mead, he left something behind. He left Gunnlod with child. The beautiful Gunnlod was carrying Odin's child. She gave birth to a boy in the stalactite-littered cave, and he was named Bragi. When Bragi grew into a beautiful young man it was discovered that he possessed the most beautiful voice ever heard in the nine worlds. The dwarfs were so moved by the loveliness of his voice they presented him with a magical golden harp. But Bragi did not wish to reside under the mountain, and he set out for Asgard in a vessel given to him by the dwarfs. He sailed the ship out of the subterranean realm of his mother and floated into the dwarf-realm of Nain, the dwarf of death. Bragi did not fear Nain and clutching his harp in his hands and he began singing the wondrous and moving song of life. The music he made and words he song emanated through the nine worlds, rising to Asgard and sinking to the darkest depth of Hel.

Eventually Bragi's ship touch land on the shores of a great wilderness. He collected his belongings and proceeded to walk through the forest and fields of this land. All the while he walked, he sang his songs, bringing songs of joy to all of nature. Where ever he touched foot to ground, flowers blossomed, trees buds and grass grew rich and thick. Birds began to sing upon hearing Bragi pass and insects chirped and clipped and cricketed along with the birds. Even the leaves on the branches of the trees rustled their songs in the winds as Bragi passed.

Soon Bragi came upon the most fair Goddess, Idun, the daughter of Ivad. This fair Goddess of immortality gave beauty and color to all of nature. She brought Spring with her where ever she passed. When she and Bragi set eyes upon each other, the song of love sang in their hearts. It was only natural for these two lovely beings to fall in love and marry, and this is exactly what they did.

Once the bonds of marriage had been tied, they hastened to Asgard. When Heimdall saw them approach, he spread the word through the heavenly realm that Spring was approaching. They made their way to take their place before the throne of Odin, and when Odin heard Bragi sing, he rewarded his son by inscribing the magic runes on his tongue and presenting him with the magic mead. Bragi helped himself to a healthy draught of the magic mead and received the priceless gifts of poetry and oratory. For all time Bragi would remain the minstrel of Asgard, and rely in song and verse the deeds of all the great heroes that passed through the gates of Valhalla to be received by Odin. For it is his duty to chronicle the deeds of both Gods and man.

## **VI: THE WORSHIP OF BRAGI:**

Bragi should be celebrated as the God of poetry, elocution and song. Men who especially carry the gifts of Bragi within themselves are called Braga-men, and women who do the same are known as Braga-women. We must always honor Bragi during all festive occasions through song and poetry. The most important times to honor Bragi are at Yuletide celebrations and at funerals.

When ever we toast Bragi, we should do it by drinking from cups shaped like ships. These cups are called Bragaful, and they should be blessed by making the sacred sign of the hammer over them. The head of every family should drink from these cups after making solemn oaths to preform ceratin deeds that are needed to be done in the coming year. Once he has done this, all his guests should follow his example and make pledges for the new year, declaring what they swear they to do before everyone.



Bragi should be presented either in youthful form or as an old man with long white hair and even a longer beard. In both guises he should be holding his golden harp.

# 9

## *IDUN: THE GODDESS OF ETERNAL YOUTH*

### **I: IDUN'S GOLDEN APPLES OF THE LIFE-FORCE:**

Idun is usually depicted as a young, beautiful and very vivacious young Goddess. Her name means the Rejuvenating One. She is the personification of immortal youth and the season of spring. She is reputed to have no birth (beginning) and is never to die (end). Idun appeared in Asgard on the arm of Bragi and was made welcomed. Idun is the Goddess of the Life-Force, and is the personification of the Life-Force. She was welcomed by the Gods and was beloved by all. She brought with her wondrous apples, and is depicted as carrying a basket full of these apples. The apples are a representation of the Life-Force and when eaten, they bestow eternal youth, beauty and life to whomever eats them.

“The golden apples  
From her garden  
Have yielded the gift of youth,  
To whomever eats them every day.”  
(Richard Wagner)

The Gods and Goddesses are dependent on the Life-Force for their eternal youth and vigor, like all things in the cosmos. They must eat of Idun's apples (the Life-Force) to remain vigorous, youthful and powerful. Because Idun has no beginning or birth, she is not of the Aesir or the Vanir. She represents the purity of the Life-Force, and the purity that is the essence of the Gods and the Children of the Gods. Her casket or basket is represented in folklore as the Horn of Plenty, which is never empty. No matter how many apples she takes from her basket, it

always remains full. Again, this is representative of the eternalness of the Life-Force.

Idun appears as a very young, sweet and naive maiden who does not say much. She is married to Bragi who is the God of Poetry. The Gods have to guard and protect Idun and her golden apples from the greedy clutches of the dwarfs and giants, who are always trying to kidnap Idun and steal her apples. The apples have the power to free one from the tyranny of Time.

Her apples hold a great deal of power because they are the Life-Force. The golden apples also appear in the pagan Greek religion. One of Herakles tasks is to fetch the golden apples. In the old Roman religion, the Goddess, Nehalennia, was depicted as sitting in a chair with a bowl of golden apples beside her. And in the Celtic tradition, golden apples are also associated with eternal youth. Frigg also has Gna drop an apple in the lap of a queen for her to eat and it results in her becoming pregnant, and Skirnir offered to the giantess, Gerd, golden apples if she would marry Frey. Again—the apple represents the Life-Force. Idun's runes are Jera, Berkano and Inguz. The symbol of the golden apples as the Life-Force must go back to when all Indo-European tribes were one nation.

## II: THE THEFT OF IDUN'S APPLES:

Odin, Loki and Honir were out exploring a region of wilderness in Midgard. The three often took such excursions together, and enjoyed exploring the nine worlds. They came to a region that seemed barren and devoid of all life. Even plants were rare in this region of Midgard. The landscape was covered with spiky, hard and barren rocks that made travel difficult. The three Gods decided to make for a huge, conical mountain that loomed in the distance. They traveled all day until they finally came across an icy blue river that was fed by melting glaciers from the mountain. They followed the river into a valley and found it filled with green, golden and brown fields.

Odin, Loki and Honir had not brought any provisions with them and they were now very hungry. But as they began to explore the valley, they discovered a herd of thousands of oxen. After killing one of the beast, the three explorers gathered a great deal of wood and kindled a fire to cook the ox by cutting up the beast and placing its meat over the fire.

The Gods watched as the meat cooked. The smell made them even more hungry, and they could barely contain their hunger. When they thought the joints of meat were cooked, they scattered the flames and removed the meat. But when they tried to eat the meat, they discovered that it was not cooked.

“As hungry as I am,” Odin said, “I will not eat raw meat. We’ll have to rekindle the fire and let the meat cook some more.”

Loki and Honir did as Odin said and rekindled the fire, and let the meat cook some more.

As the Gods watched the meat roast, they found the weather beginning to change. As the sun fled from the wolf on its heels and hid behind the western horizon, the air grew cold and winds swept down out of the north. The Gods wrapped themselves in their furs to keep warm and moved closer to the fire. They could smell the meat cooking and this only made their hunger even greater.

“I think the meat is done,” Honir said. “What do you think?”

“Honir, I think you always have trouble making up your mind,” Loki said, as he leaped to his feet and began putting out the fire. “I’m sure the meat is done. It certainly looks done.”

Odin cut a piece of the meat to taste it. “It’s still not cooked,” he said. “It tastes as if it’s hardly cooked at all.”

“That’s impossible,” Honir said. “The fire has been burning long enough to cook several oxen.”

“And yet, the meat is still raw,” Loki said as he scowled over the taste of the meat. “It’s as if it was never placed over the fire.”

“I don’t like the look of this,” Odin said. “It’s not natural. There must be some kind of magic at work here?”

“If it’s magic, then it’s in the shape of an eagle,” Loki said as he pointed above them.

When the three travelers looked up, they saw a large eagle perched in the highest branches of an oak tree.

The eagle was watching the happenings below him. “Yes, it was I who stopped the fire from cooking your meat,” the eagle finally said at the three faces looking up at him. “I’m hungry and would gladly remove my spell if you agree to permit me to eat my fill of the meat.”

The three Gods talked among themselves for a few seconds and they finally agreed to the eagle’s demands. “We agree,” Odin said. “Remove your spell and you may eat your fill before any of us touch the meat.”

The eagle removed his spell and the meat instantly appeared cooked and fit to eat. He flapped his huge wings and swooped down from the branches. Hovering over the cooked ox, he grabbed it and lifted it in his talons and set it down near the trunk of the old oak, and began eating his fill. The Gods could see that the eagle was not going to stop eating until he had devoured the entire ox. This made Loki so angry that he raised his staff and swung it at the eagle. When the eagle

was struck, he let go of the meat and screeched in anger. He began flapping his wings, causing a great storm of wind to blow up. As the eagle rose into the air, to Loki's horror, he discovered that the staff was stuck to his body. But even more terrible was the fact that Loki could not let go of the staff. As the eagle quickly rose into the air, Loki and the staff rose with him. No matter how hard Loki pulled and twisted, he could not let go of the staff, nor could he pry it free of the eagle.

In seconds, Loki found himself being carried through the sky by the eagle, as the great bird flew off toward the east. But the eagle did not fly straight off. The eagle would swoop down so that he flew close to the top of the forest, causing Loki to scrap along the top of the trees. The branches cut Loki and bruised him, but if this was bad enough, the eagle decided to swoop even farther down, close to the surface of the rocky landscape, once he had cleared the forest. Loki was now banged and dragged across the jagged rocks until he was bleeding and black and blue.

"Have mercy on me!" Loki cried as the eagle continue to drag Loki along the top of a glacier, now.

"Mercy, I say!" Loki cried once more. "I can't take more of this punishment, and what good would a dead Loki be to you?"

"I will have mercy," the eagle now said, "but you must first swear to do me a favor."

"What favor could I possible do for you?" Loki asked.

"You must swear to bring Idun and her apples out of Asgard," the eagle said. "Do this for me and I will show you mercy."

Loki did not say anything at first. He now realized that this was no eagle, but some giant in the disguise of an eagle. And he had tricked and trapped him. As Loki thought about what the eagle demanded, the eagle swooped down once more and began punishing Loki by slamming him into the side of a cliff. Loki realized he could not take much more of this punishment and finally agreed to the eagle's demands.

"Yes! I'll do as you say," Loki pleaded. "I swear it."

Loki's hands now slipped free of the staff and he fell to the ground, unhurt. The eagle swooped down close to where he landed.

"Now listen closely to my instructions," the eagle said. "In several days, when the sun is high over head, lead Idun out of Asgard and over the Bifrost Bridge to Midgard. Do you understand?"

Loki picked himself off and examined his wounds. "Yes. I understand," he said. After the eagle flew off, he began limping back to Odin and Honir.

Seven days later, Loki found Idun walking through the green fields that surrounded her hall. She was singing and enjoying the sun and cold breeze that blew through the tall grass. Young, childlike, she did not have a care in the world. Wars, conflicts and suffering were not her concern. She did not even notice the passage of time. Love, joy and the excitement of youth were her only interests. She danced and sang in the tall grass with the basket of apples looped over one shoulder.

“Dear Idun!” Loki called out to the Goddess.

Bragi’s wife stopped and watched as Loki hurried to her side.

“At last I’ve found you,” Loki said. “I’ve been looking everywhere for you. I could not wait to tell you what I discovered.”

“Discovered?” Idun asked. “What have you discovered?”

“I found it deep in the forest,” Loki said as he fainted excitement. “When I came across it, I could not believe my eyes. I said to myself, I must tell dear, sweet Idun what I found.”

“Found? Tell me?” Idun repeated. “What are you talking about?”

“The tree,” Loki said. “I found a wondrous tree deep in the forest that grows golden apples like the ones that you carry in your basket. I don’t know if they have the same potency as your apples, but perhaps we should go and examine them for ourselves?”

Idun nodded and agreed to go with Loki.

“Make sure you bring your apples,” Loki reminded Idun. “We can compare them to those that grow on the tree.”

Idun followed Loki as he led her out of Asgard and passed Heimdall’s hall. Loki led Idun by the hand across the flaming colors of the Rainbow Bridge, as they descended toward Midgard. And as soon as Idun set foot on Midgard, she heard the flapping of powerful wings over head. The eagle had been waiting, and when he saw Idun, he swooped down and snatched her up. He carried her and he apples off in his talons. They flew over the sea, east toward Jotunheim and made for the great hall owned by the giant Thiazi—for the eagle was none other than Thiazi himself.

As time passed, the Gods did not receive their daily visits by Idun, who would pass out her apples for them to eat. At first they thought she had gone on some journey with her husband and would return shortly, but as the days passed and she did not appear, they grew anxious. Little by little the Life-Force drained from the Gods and they grew extremely concerned. Without her golden apples they

would not be able to replenish their Life-Force. They would grow old and wither and lose their power over the cosmos. And this is exactly what was beginning to happen. The Gods and Goddesses were beginning to grow old. Their skin began to wrinkle and hung from their limbs. Their hair grew gray and coarse. Their strength and vigor drained out of them. Their eyes became bloodshot and misty. All their senses began to fade and their hands trembled with feebleness. Their bones ached and they lost the spring in their step. Hour by hour, and day by day their Life-Force poured out of them.

Not only did their bodies fail them, so did their minds. They became absent-minded and repeated what they said. Sometimes they forgot their own names and could not remember where they lived. They all became obsessed with only one thing—the passage of time. Without Idun and her apples, they were now victims of Time and its powers to ravage them.

Only Odin still possessed the force of mind and body to rally the Gods and Goddesses to council so they could discuss their plight. When all the citizens of Asgard and Vanaheim assembled before Odin, they discovered only two were missing—Idun and Loki.

“It is obvious to all who still possess their senses that Idun is missing, and her absence is the cause of our lost of vigor,” Odin said. “If she is not found and returned to us, it will mean our end, and that will mean the entire cosmos will lose its order, and its parts will be sent flying into chaotic destruction. Did anyone see her?”

It was Heimdall who spoke. “I saw her leave Asgard with Loki,” the White God said. “He led her by the hand across the Bifrost Bridge to Midgard.”

No one spoke. Heimdall’s news laid heavy throughout Gladsheim. Everyone understood what Heimdall’s news meant—that it was due to Loki’s trickery that Idun was missing. He was the cause of their plight.

“We must find Loki, now!” Odin ordered. “Capture him and bring him to me.”

Despite their weakened state, the Gods set out in search of Loki. Their lives depended on finding the Trickster. Every corner of Asgard was combed. Every hall and field was searched and when they finally found the Master of Lies, he was asleep in Idun’s field. They quickly seized him, and before he could react, they dragged him to Valaskjalf where Odin was waiting.

“We know that you are responsible for Idun’s disappearance,” Odin said. Loki tried to deny any involvement, but Odin refused to listen to him. “Don’t lie to me, Loki! I know you are the cause of Idun’s disappearance, and you must bring her back to us. If you don’t, we will put you to death.”

Loki finally confessed. "I did the deed," Loki said. "But I had no choice." Loki explained how the eagle had tricked him into swearing to lead Idun out of Asgard, to Midgard, where he was waiting to abduct her. "If I had not agreed, it would have caused me my life."

"You could have come to us and tell us of Thiazi's delivery, and we would have laid a trap for him," Odin said. "But you didn't."

Loki said nothing at Odin accusation. He looked to the ground so that the Gods could not see the gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

"Since you prefer the company of eagles to us, we'll bound you to rock and perch with a blood-eagle on your back, so that it might feast on you," Odin said.

"No!" Loki cried as he fell to his knees, pleading for mercy.

"The eagle will rip your spine out from your back, and pick at your ribs," Odin declared.

"No!" Loki said, now groveling at Odin's feet.

Odin clenched his teeth in disgust at Loki. "Piece by piece the eagle will slowly devour you alive, as it picks your bones clean, and you will not die until the last part of you is swallowed by the bird."

"No! Please! Mercy!" Loki now kissed Odin's feet.

Odin kicked the fire-imp away from him. "This is your fate if you do not return Idun to us," Odin said. His voice was as cold and hard as the ancient glaciers that stood since the beginning of time, in Niflheim.

"I will do as you say," Loki cried. "If Freyja will lend me her falcon wings, I will fly directly to Thiazi's hall and fetch Idun back to Asgard. This I swear."

Freyja agreed and led Loki to her hall, where the falcon wings were kept. Loki followed and smirked as she handed him the wings.

"Not the beauty you used to be?" he said.

Freyja's blue eyes stared at the Trickers, as she gave him her wings. She said nothing, but hate glared from the eyes that caused Loki to step back in fright.

### III: THE RETURN OF IDUN:

Loki put on the falcon wings and flew to Jotunheim. He did not stop until he reached the great hall known as Thrymheim (Place of Dim). It was huge and black and seemed to grow right out of the top of the mountain that it was perched on. Terrible winds whipped around its vast walls that were covered with ice and snow. When Loki entered the castle, he discovered that Thiazi was not at home. He and his daughter, Skadi, had gone fishing.



Loki flew as fast as he could through the giant chambers and hallways in Thrymheim, until he found dear Idun. She was being held a prisoner in one of the locked rooms. He found her sitting by a fire with no other comforts. When Loki entered the room through the small window, he extended his wings and mumbled runes that instantly transformed her into a small nut. Loki grabbed her in his claws and flew out of the window and back toward Asgard, as fast as he could.

Shortly after Loki left, Thiazi and his daughter had returned from fishing. Thiazi immediately went to check on his prisoner and discovered she was gone. He roared and stamped in anger. "She could not have escaped without help!" Thiazi shouted. "And they could not have gotten far." He called for his servants to bring him his eagle wings, which he donned, and transformed once more into the huge eagle. He set out toward Asgard and soon he could see the falcon flying toward the land of the Gods. The eagle had superior vision and was stronger than the falcon. He was able to keep the falcon in sight, even though it was many miles away. Thiazi flapped his wings hard to catch up with the fleeing falcon. As Loki drew closer to Asgard, he realized he was being chased, and that the eagle following him was catching up to him.

Odin was sitting on his throne in Hlidskjalf, watching events unfolding in the nine worlds. Nothing could escape Odin when he sat on his throne. He could see grass growing, and every atom or distant star was within his sight. So Odin immediately noticed the falcon flying toward Asgard with the eagle closing in on it, from behind. He realized he was watching Loki returning to Asgard, and that Thiazi was trying to catch him before he could reach the realm of the Gods. He called on all the Gods and Goddesses in Asgard and their servants to gather at the border of Asgard. They collected all the wood they could gather and piled the wood high against the walls of Asgard.

The Gods stood ready as Heimdall stood watch. When he saw Loki approaching Asgard, he raised the alarm. Odin told everyone to get ready. They watched as they saw the falcon now dive down toward the walls of Asgard. The huge eagle followed the falcon as it swooped down.

"Light the wood!" Odin ordered. The Gods did as he ordered and the fires roared high into the air just as the falcon passed into Asgard.

Loki had entered Asgard before the fire rose into the air. The eagle was less fortunate. Thiazi was flying so fast that he could not stop in time, when he saw the rising wall of flames ascend into the heaven before him. Thiazi flew right through the flames and into Asgard. His feathers caught fire, causing him to fall

to the ground in pain and agony. The Gods leaped on him and immediately killed the giant disguised as an eagle.

Loki removed Freyja's wings and returned to his true form. He smiled at the gray and aging Gods and Goddesses and held out his hand. When he opened his fingers, there, sitting in his palm was the tiny nut. The Shape-Shifter waved his other hand over the nut and as he whispered several runes. Instantly the nut was transformed back into the lovely Idun.

Idun stood, young and beautiful, and holding her basket of golden apples. When she saw how the Gods had aged, she quickly passed out her precious, life-giving apples to her fellow Asgardians. As the Gods ate, they were filled with the Life-Force once more and their youth and vigor was restored to them. They were overjoyed and ready to forgive Loki for his treachery. They were even willing to place Thiazi's eyes in the heavens, where they were transformed into stars, so as too placid his kin of any desire they might nurture of avenging his death.

#### **IV: THE GODDESS OF SPRING:**

The tale of Idun's abduction and rescue is often interpreted as the yearly cycle of the changing of seasons. The cold, wintery giant, Thiazi kidnaps Idun, the Goddess of Spring, and imprisons her in his winter domain. This is the end of spring-summer and the domination of the world by autumn-winter. But with the return of Idun, spring-summer is restored. But the meaning of this tale goes deeper.

The loss of Idun and her apples are not just the waning of the spring-summer season, but the decline and fall of our Folk, due to the loss of its bond with the essence of its Gods—the Life-Force. Our Folk has a Life-Force and that Life-Force is what makes us strong and vigorous as a people. When a Folk is confident and self-assured, it will act youthfully, not be afraid to take chances and act aggressive in its own interest. But when the Folk loses its youthful confidence, it acts like an old person—it refuses to act in its own defense, and prefers to avoid all conflicts. It wants only comfort and security so that it might live out its remaining days in peace and quiet.

Idun is the Goddess of Spring and spring is the time when the Life-Force restores life to the world. It is this spring-like nature that our Folk must restore with itself, if it wants to survive through the Fimbulvetr (the Winter of Ragnarok). The Folk must eat of Idun's apples every day. It must renew its bond with its Gods, and thus keep healthy its collective soul. Each of us should celebrate the Gods in our own way, and in this way, we strengthen the Gods, and in return, they strengthen us both individually and our Folk collective. The act of celebrat-

ing, worshipping or evoking the Gods (how ever you wish to describe the process) is the act of eating Idun's apples.

## V: IDUN'S FALL INTO DARKNESS:

One day Idun was sitting under the branches of the Yggdrasil. It was a pleasant day and the sun was shining, which made Idun sleepy. When she finally slipped into a deep but gentle sleep, she lost her grip on the sacred ash tree, and fell into the ground beneath the tree. She slid down through the roots of the tree, and to the lowest depths of Niflheim. When she came to, she found herself, to her horror, looking up into the dreadful face of Hel. She had descended into the Netherworld of Hel. Hel waved her hand over her and she fell back into a deep sleep, which had entrapped her and caused her to fall.

When Odin discovered that Idun was missing, he sent Bragi, Idun's husband, Heimdal, Thor and the other Gods and Goddesses, in search of the Goddess of the Life-Force. It was Heimdall, the White God, who reported what had happened to Idun. They agreed to descend to Hel and fetch her back. Odin gave them a white wolf-skin to cover and protect her, against the cold. He learned that it was Hel, Loki's daughter, who had cased a spell over Idun, causing her to fall into the Netherworld. When the Gods had reached Hel, it was Thor who forced their way into Hel's realm. When they found the sleeping Goddess, they wrapped her in the white wolf-skin. So overcome by Hel's spell, she could not speak or move, or even open her eyes, even though she was conscious. The Gods tried to remove her, but found that they could not pass Hel's gate so long as Idun was still under Hel's enchantment. This caused Idun grieve and fear that she would never return to the world of the living. Tears began to role down her pinkish checks from under closed eyelids. Realizing that Idun could not be restored to the world of the living, Bragi, her husband swore that he would not return without her. He took out his harp and began to play it as he sang. His song was so filled with his love for his dear wife that if finally freed her from Hel's evil spell.

It was the love that filled Bragi's song that called her back to him and the world of the living.

It freed her from Hel (who is in a state of half-living and half-dead). The tale is symbolic of the Life-Force of the Folk (Idun) breaking its bonds with the Gods, or the Cosmos (the Yggdrasil), by falling into the realm of death (Hel). She remains entrapped or asleep, unable to move or speak until she is awoken by Bragi's song—the song of the Gods (the call back to the Gods of our Folk). This act of Bragi singing his song, is the awakening of our Folk from its slumber of

ignorance that it has fallen into, in the present state of the world of the Twenty-first Century. The Life-Force of Idun will be restored to us if we listen to the wisdom and truth personified by Bragi, and which is the Folk Faith. And that truth is—we must love ourselves, our heritage, our culture and our Folk to the point that we are willing to sacrifice everything for it.

# 10

## *NJORD: THE FATHER OF THE VANIR*

### **I: NJORD AND NERTHUS: TWIN FERTILITY DEITIES:**

Njord is the oldest and eldest of the Vanir. His name has different meanings, but is usually translated as “strength.” He is sometimes associated with his female counterpart, Nerthus. Njord is a water deity, while Nerthus is an earth deity, and both elements are associated with fertility. The Vanir are primarily earth and water deities, while the Aesir are air and fire deities. Sometimes Nerthus is referred to as “Mother Earth.” This would mean Njord and Nerthus represent the union of earth and water, the two fertility elements. In Roman times, according to the Roman, Tacitus, Nerthus lived on an island in the North Sea. Again, her island home represents the union of water and earth. This pair may actually represent twins, because Njord seeks the giantess, Skadi, as his wife.

Twins are common in the Vanir. Frey and Freyja are twins and male and female counter parts, representing fertility. In ancient Roman and Celtic times, bridges over rivers and marshes were often crowned with a pair of male and female wooden figures that could represent either Frey and Freyja or Njord and Nerthus. But just because they are twins, it does not mean they were not husband and wife. Fertility deities often mate with their siblings. In fact, Loki accuses Njord of begetting his children, Frey and Freyja by mating with his sister, who is Nerthus.

Njord and Nerthus are considered to have the power of foresight. The depths of the deep sea and the underworld associated with the dead, and thought to be beneath the surface of this world, are often thought to be realms where the future can be foretold. This is why the Well of Wyrð, which combines both elements of water and earth, is considered a fountain from which one gains the power of fore-

sight and can foresee the future. Earth and water are also the elements in which the roots of the Yggdrasil are planted and seek nourishment. Njord and Nerthus can be considered as feeding the structure of the Life-Force (the Yggdrasil).

Tacitus tells us that many of the Germans of his time, especially along the shore of the Baltic Sea, worshiped the Earth Goddess, and her symbol was the wild boar. The boar is often associated with Frey and sometimes with Freyja. Njord is often considered possessing a ship, and his son, Frey, also is in possession of a great ship. Njord is the God of Ships and Seamen. His home is Noatun (Enclosure of Ships). Noatun is a place of waves and seagulls, and is a hof made of wood. It is sometimes referred to as Njord's Hof, Njord's Grove, Njord's island and Njord's Bay. Njord possesses beautiful feet and the footprint is a sign which is associated with the beach and sand.

Njord is also associated with the beach and seacoast. His bird symbol is the seagull. He is the patron God of all water activities, including occupations and sports. He is the God that governs the activities that include fishing, swimming, boating, sailing, deep sea diving, frolicking at the beach, all activities on rivers and lakes, surfing and water skiing.

Njord is not mentioned in the battle of Ragnarok. It is thought that he returns to Vanaheim. He is the instrument of the resurrected sea that rises during the Age of Gimli.

Colors associated with Njord are deep blue, black and even brown. The stones, jet and malachite are associated with Nerthus and Njord, and Njord's gift to mankind is amber.

## **II: SKADI: NJORD'S WIFE:**

Skadi is the daughter of the giant, Thiazi, and is married to Njord. She is associated with winter, cold, ice, skiing and all winter activities. Her name sometimes is translated as "Shadow" or "Scathe." She becomes one of the Aesir and is the Goddess of the North and Winter. She actually is the daughter of the giant who kidnaped Idun and stole her apples. The Gods sought to appease her by placing the eyes of her slain father in the sky, transforming them into stars. Skadi accepted the Gods' act of appeasement and she was soon welcomed in Asgard. Her great hall, Thrymheim, was transformed into a holy dwelling. As payment, the Gods permitted her to marry into Asgard, and she is referred to either as "the shining bride of the Gods," or "the wise bride of the Gods."

She was once worshiped widely in ancient times. Those who loved her especially found her stark beauty reflecting the beauty that one finds in the dead of

winter. It is not hard for all lovers of winter, especially those who enjoy winter sports, to fall in love with Skadi. She is associated with the howling wolves, icy winds and snow storms. She shines like the radiance of the glaciers and snow-covered mountains and is often depicted as wearing skis. Sometimes she wears snowshoes and is referred to as “the Snowshoe Goddess.” She is also very skilled with the bow and can use it very proficiently while skiing down mountains or across country.

Skadi dwells where it is forever snow-covered. One should celebrate her in icy and snowy locations. This is especially true during the winter months. Seek Skadi for protection and assistance during the wintertime. Like winter, she is reputed to never laugh, though Loki found a way to make her laugh. This would suggest that she is also a Goddess associated with the dead, for the dead never laugh. She is also associated with Loki, and when he is bound in punishment for killing Balder, it is Skadi who holds a bowl over his head to catch the venom that drips from the fangs of a snake. The connection between Skadi and Loki also has to do with the fact that it is Loki who is responsible for her father’s death. This makes her the Goddess of Vengeance as well as Winter and Death.

Skadi has no children with Njord, but she refers to Frey as her son. This probably is in reference to his being her stepson. She is also reputed to have produced a super race of humans or Jarls, with Odin. This is a reference to the origins of the Aryan or Indo-European race originating in the North. One of her sons is named Saeminger, and is considered the father of a heroic line of Jarls from the land of Hladir. This heroic line fought off the encroachment of Christianity, and are considered the defenders of both the Gods and the Folk. The name, Saemingir means “the Gray One”, which is another name for “Wolf”.

Her loyalty and love for her father shows that Skadi is also a Goddess of Family and the Folk. She is also the Goddess of Hunters and thus wild beast. Her name is the root for the word, Scandinavia. Being a strong and independent woman, she is the Goddess of Strong and Independent Women, but not feminism. For as was mentioned, she uses her strength of character in the defense and expansion of the family, kin and the Folk, which is the anthesis to modern feminism.

### **III: THE MARRIAGE OF NJORD AND SKADI:**

Sitting atop a craggy mountain, laced with ice and snow and blasted with arctic winds was the giant fortress known as Thrymheim. It was own by the most powerful and fierce giant, Thiazi. With him lived his most beautiful daughter, Skadi.

But for a long time Skadi lived all alone. Days, weeks and months had passed without any sign of Thiazi returning to Thrymheim. In all this time, Skadi's father had not returned, and she had not heard any word of his whereabouts. Skadi knew her father would not stay away from her for so long a time. The giant and his daughter were united with a kin-love that was stronger than the hardest steel. Deep down in her heart she instinctively knew that she would never see her father again, though she refused to admit it to herself. She had decided to go look for him. She feared that he was ambushed by the Aesir.

Skadi donned a coat of mail and body armor. She chose her father's favorite weapons: a sword that was engraved with magic runes, a spear fashioned from ash wood, a round shield decorated with two fierce black eagles, red eyes and blood dripping from their beaks. Looking like some fierce Valkyrie, she left Thrymheim and set out on her journey to find her father.

After the Gods had killed Thiazi for kidnaping Idun and stealing her apples, they had recovered their youth and vigor after feasting on Idun's golden apples. With their vitality restored, order and peace was restored to the universe once more. The sun shined in the blue sky. Animals and birds sang and danced in golden fields and clear skies. The Gods went about their business, ensuring that no evil befell Midgard and Asgard. They were at peace with each other and that peace extended to the nine worlds.

This peace was interrupted when they heard the alarm-call of Heimdall's great horn. The God rushed to the Bifrost Bridge to see what threat Heimdall had discovered. They saw the icy wind that was Skadi, approaching Asgard, but the Gods had no wish to spill any more blood. When she finally arrived at the entrance of Asgard, the Gods asked her if she would accept gold for compensation of her father's death?

"Even if Freyja cried for a hundred centuries, you could not hope to match the wealth that inhabits my father's hall," Skadi said. "My father's father, Olvadi, and his two brothers, Idi and Gang, left more gold than you could hope to imagine. What good does wealth do? It cannot return to me my father's love."

"If gold will not compensate for the lose of your father's love, then what will you take in place of your lose?" the Gods asked.

Skadi looked at the beautiful Balder. "I would accept the love of a good husband in return for my father's love," Skadi said. "And one more thing. My sorrow is great, you must drive it out of my heart."



The Gods agreed, but told Skadi she could only chose her husband by his feet. "You can see nothing else of the one you chose for you husband," Odin said. Skadi agreed.

Odin assembled all the Gods in the fields near Gladsheim. They stood behind a great canvas with only their feet visible to Skadi. Skadi walked along the canvas until she picked the most beautiful and perfect pair of feet. She was sure that such a fair pair of feet had to belong to no one else but Balder.

"You have chosen well," Odin said.

Skadi watched as the feet walked out from behind the canvas. She was sure they belonged to Balder, but was surprised to discover that they belonged to the sea God, Njord. His skin was weather-worn and salty and he smelled like the beach. She was so surprised, that her icy glare caused Njord to drop his smile.

"I thought..." she began to speak.

"Be careful of what you chose for the first words that pass before us," Njord said. "For they will be the foundation of the marriage that we build together."

"I was tricked," Skadi said. Her voice was as cold and hard as her hall in Jotunheim.

"It could have been worst," Njord said. "The feet you chose could have belonged to Loki."

"The choice has been made," Odin declared. "You have chosen the Father of the Vanir to replace your father. I think you have chosen well."

"There is still the second part of the bargain to be fulfilled," Skadi said. "You must drive out my sorrow with laughter."

"That should not be hard?" Odin said.

Skadi shook her head. "I seldom smiled or laughed while my father was alive, and now I doubt if I will ever laugh or smile again."

"Never say never," Loki said as he stepped forward with a mischievous smile stretched across his impish face.

Loki wondered if Skadi knew how her father died? Did she know that he had helped Thiazi kidnap Idun and steal her apples? Did she know that he helped to trap her father and thus permit the Gods to kill him?

"If anyone can make you laugh, Loki can," Odin said.

"Surely you are mistaken, oh noble All-Father," Loki said and bowed low, as if he was some lowly thrall standing before the all-power Odin. "If you knew what had just happened to me, you would not think me capable of making the icy glaciers melt." Loki then took out a leather thong for everyone to see. "Well, if you will all listen, I'll tell you what happened when I tried to take that goat over there to the market with me." Loki smiled at Skadi and raised his eyebrows. "You prob-

ably know how difficult a goat can be, my lady? They don't always do as they're told."

Loki walked over to the goat and fastened one end of the thong to the goat's beard. "My hands were filled and I needed the assistance of the goat to help bring my wares to the market. So I tied the other end of the thong to my testicles."

"You what?" Skadi asked in shock.

"You heard right, my lady," Loki said. "I tied them just like this." Loki proceeded to do as he claimed he did before. He tied one end of the thong to the goat's beard and the other end to his testicles.

"We were on our way to the market when we heard the cry of wolves," Loki said. He held his hands to his mouth and duplicated the howling calls of timber wolves. The goat moved away upon hearing the calls, causing the thong to stretch and pull at Loki's testicles.

Loki struggled against the pull of the goat. But the goat finally surrendered and leaped at Loki. This caused Loki to go flying back and he landed right in Skadi's arms.

Skadi could not contain herself and burst into uncontrolled laughter at the sight of the ridiculous looking Trickster. She laughed so hard that tears of joy rolled down her cheeks and did not even turn into ice as they did. So happy did Skadi feel that she even forgave Loki for his part in her father's death—at least for a while.

Odin was so pleased that he decided to show his pleasure by honoring Skadi. He pulled two liquid balls from his pocket and held them up. Skadi recognized them as her father's eyes.

Odin smiled and then flung them into the heavens. "Look and see the eyes of your father, Skadi," Odin ordered. "They have fixed themselves in the sky as two stars. There they will remain until the end of time, so that they might look down and watch over you forever, child. Have heart to know that your father will always watch over you."

Skadi was so moved that her cold heart melted and happily agreed to her marriage to Njord. But the marriage would not be an easy one.

Njord asked Skadi to come and live with him by the sea, in his hall, Noatun. But Skadi could not stand the cries of the seagulls, and the lapping waves of the sea against the shore. The smell of salt made her sick and she longed for the cool, clear air of her icy domain. She told Njord that she wanted to go and live in Thrymheim. They discussed the problem and finally agreed that they would live nine days and nights in Noatun and then nine days and nights at Thrymheim.

When Njord and Skadi left Noatun, they made their way to Jotunheim, to live in Thrymheim. But Njord found the icy domain unbearable. The sun's light reflected off the snowy white heights and blinded him. The winds cut through him and he hated the endless blankets of snow and ice that covered all the lands around Thrymheim. But Skadi was happy to be home and gave herself to her new husband.

After nine days and nights, the couple agreed to return to Noatun, but Skadi immediately began to long for Thrymheim. "I cannot sleep with all the noise of ships and gulls in this place," Skadi complained. "I think I will go mad."

For a long time Njord and Skadi moved back and forth between Noatun and Thrymheim, but no matter how much they loved each other, they could not find happiness out of their elements. The gap between their tastes was too great. No matter how hot their passions might burn, and no matter how strong their love and lust was for each other, they could not accustom themselves to the other's environment. They finally agreed to separate. Skadi returned to Thrymheim and Njord remained at Noatun.

The lesson of Njord and Skadi is simple. For a union between a man and a woman to be successful, they needed more than lust and even love. The union requires shared interests and taste, for their union to succeed. There is no way for winter and summer to coexist. Water will not remain on top of the mountain, and will always pour down its slopes to the sea. When the differences are too great, one will always have to give way to the other, and that would mean the triumph of one and the demise of the other. It is best to seek love and companionship within one's own environment and with one's own kind, for even love, no matter how hot it might burn, cannot change one's nature.

### **XIII: THE WORSHIP OF NJORD:**

Njord is not only the God for activities that deal with water, but should be revered during the summer months. He is viewed as a handsome God, usually clad in green. He wears a crown made from sea shells and seaweed. Sometimes he wears a brown, wide brim hat decorated with eagle or heron feathers. He is called upon to clam winter storms at sea, and should during hurricane seasons. Njord should also be called upon to help irrigate crops and end droughts and floods. He should be invoked to bring good weather at sea or along land that borders the sea. Njord is evoked when blessing all ships and boats in and out of port. When evoking Njord, one should drink water in his name.

## *FREY: THE GOD OF PEACE*

### **I: THE LORD OF THE ELVES:**

Frey is the son of Njord and Freyja's twin brother. He is one of the Vanir who came to live in Asgard. He was sometimes referred to as Fro, Freyr, Freyer, and Frea. He was given by the Aesir the realm of the light elves or fairies to rule, Alfheim. He is the God of peace, and of Sunshine. He is associated with fertility, sex, reproduction, and summer, and the most important God of the Vanir. He provides the warm sunshine and the gentle sun rains that fertilize the earth and brings lush vegetation and prosperity. He rules over the light elves, who is the personification of the forces of fertile nature that gives life to the earth; causes trees and grass to grow, causes flowers to bloom, the summer showers to fall, and the sun to shine. The elves do his work and obey his every order, for they are beneficent spirits

Frey owns a wonderful sword, which represents the sun's rays. It has the power to fight successfully, even in the hands of someone who is unskilled in the art of sword fighting. It's most effective against the frost giants, whom he hates almost as much as Thor.

He also owns the golden-bristled boar, Gullenbursti (Golden-bristled), given to him by the dwarves. His boar pulls his chariot. His twin sister, Freyja, owns a sow, which is also a fertility symbol. The golden bristles of the boar are symbolic of the sun's rays or the golden field of grain. The boar is symbolic of the process of chewing up the earth with his sharp tusk, much like the plough does. He taught mankind how to plough and plant the fields, and all things dealing with farming. His is the patron God of farming, and gardening. His gifts to the world are the flowers that cover the face of the earth.

He also owns the steed known as Blodughofi (Bloody-Hooved), which can race across fire and air. The horse is sometimes known as Freyfaxi. In ancient

times, people held horse fights. These were ceremonial in nature and held in Frey's honor. The horse is also a phallic symbol.

He also owns a ship given to him by the dwarves, and is known as *Skidbladnir*. This ship is remarkable because it can sail through the air and carry a vast army in its hull, and yet, when not in use, it can be folded up into a tiny square and carried in one's pocket.

Frey was worshiped thousands of years ago, and there is evidence found of this worship in the rock cave in Oestegoetland, Sweden. There, carvings of a man with a phallic symbol, a sword and a boar were found that clearly represents Frey. Frey was associated with Sweden, and the kings of Sweden traced their line back to Frey, much as Julius Caesar traced his family line back to Venus and Mars.

Frey is sometimes associated with battle, and the boar, one of his symbols, is often referred to as a battle-boar. But Frey, as the God of Summer, does battle mainly with the frost giants. He is the life-giving warmth of summer driving out the icy cold of winter. At Ragnarok Frey is killed battling Surtur because he does not have his sword.

Frey has two servants, a married couple known by the names *Beyla* (Bee) and *Byggvir* (Barley). The bee, which produces honey, which is used to brew mead and which is sacred to the ancient Norse, and barley, a food staple necessary to survive, and used to brew ale, was representative of ale and mead.

## II: THE WORSHIP OF FREY:

According to the ancient Swedes, Frey once ruled over a golden age known as the Peace of Frodi or Frey. Frey is the God of Sweden. It was a time when the world did not know war, hunger or disease. He was the keeper of the peace and his holy places or temples should be considered places where no weapon can be brought into or any fighting should take place. Frey's temples should be a domain where people go to find peace with themselves and with the world. Contemplation and meditation should be performed in Frey's temples. Frey is the God that brings harmony and union among the Folk—the Children of the Gods. It is in his name that the many nations of the Folk should seek a harmonious union. Frey only restores to war when he battles the forces of winter.

Frey is also the God of Pleasure. He should be called upon to bring happiness in a marriage—between man and a woman. He is also called upon to bring happiness within a community. He is the God of Ecstasy, and can be associated with such other Gods as Dionysos, Shiva, Oberon, Herne and Cernunnos.

The priests of the Cult of Frey do not wear any weapons or ride stallions, as both are symbols of war. Frey gave away his sword and horse, which are symbolic acts on his part to show the Folk that there must be brotherhood and peace among the Folk. We must not fight among ourselves, but reproduce and grow.

Sacrifices to Frey should be Boar meat or horse meat. Oxen are also sacred to Frey. Midsummer's Night should be a time when Frey is remembered. He should also be remembered at the wedding ceremony. Frey's statue should also be carried around or pulled in a chariot, to bless the community. The community should ask Frey to bless the Folk so that they might be fruitful, both in children and in all their endeavors.

Frey is associated with the hill or the burial mound. He rules over the domain of the mighty ancestors. An oath to Frey can be, "So help me Frey and Njord."

Two of the most celebrated temples to Frey in ancient times were located at Thronthjeim in Norway, and at Thvera in Iceland. Oxen and horses were sacrificed to him in these temples. The meat was cooked and the blood collected. A gold ring representing Draupnir was dipped into the blood while the oath, "So help me Frey, Njord and the Almighty Odin," was spoken.

The Yule month, or Thor's month, was also sacred to Frey. It began on the longest night of the year, which was also called Mother's Night. This month was a time of joy, celebration and feasting. The Yule festival, which means wheel, which represented the sun rapidly rolling across the sky like. It was the custom for people to gather upon a hill and there they were lit ablaze a wooden wheel. It was then sent rolling down the side of the hill where it plunged into a pool of water.

All the pagan Europeans considered the Yule month the most important time of the year. In Rome it was called the Saturnalia, the celebrations were similar to those in northern Europe. The Christians could stop the ancient Europeans from celebrating their pagan holiday, so they transformed it into one of the most important holidays of the Christian calendar—Christmas.

In honor of Frey, our heathen ancestors cooked and ate the meat of a boar. The cooked beast was crowned with laurel and rosemary and carried into the hall. The father of the family or eldest male member of the gathering, placed his hands over the feast and called out, "Upon this boar of atonement, I swear to be a faithful father and head of my family, and fulfill all my obligations." After him, all other male members of the family did as he did. The dish could only be carved by a male member of the family, of unblemished reputation.

Frey was the patron of pure joy and married couples called upon him to help them live in harmony and happiness. Those who lived many years within a happy

marriage, were rewarded and given boar's flesh as a token. Later on, this custom evolved in England and Germany into giving ham or bacon to the married couples.

Another Yule custom that was also done in Frey's name was the lighting of the Yule log. It was always a huge piece of log and it was expected to burn throughout the night of the longest night of the year. The charred remains were gathered in the morning and saved. It was used to help setting fire to the log of the following year.

## II: THE WOOING OF GERD:

One day, Frey had entered Odin's hall, Valaskjalf. No one was around. Both Odin and Frigg were away, and Odin's high seat, Hildskjalf, was empty. Only Odin and Frigg were permitted to sit in the high seat, but Frey did not think it would do any harm if he sat in the seat for just a few seconds. So he sat and immediately the entire universe was visible to him. He was amazed at the sights, and when he looked toward Jotunheim, the home of the frost giants, whom he hated, he squinted his eyes to get a better look. To his surprise his eyes came to rest on what he thought was the most sight he had ever saw. What he saw was the beautiful giantess, Gerd,—the daughter of the giant, Gymir. She was coming out of her hall and she seemed to be made of the most radiant and brilliant light. He watched with amazement as she raised her white arms to close the doors of the hall. When she did, a marvelous icy-white light filled the sky and the sea and all the heavens of the nine worlds.

Frey was captivated by Gerd's beauty. He found that he could not look away. The more he watched her, the harder it was for him to divert his eyes. His heart pounded and swelled with a need to be with her. His desire for Gerd consumed him, and he surrendered to the love he felt for her. He watched her until she finally disappeared into her hall, and the world once more grew dark and barren. Frey lowered his eyes and discovered that his heart was just as dark and barren as the world without her light. He had dared to sit in Odin's high seat, and the price he paid was the loss of his heart to a love that he feared could never be. He crept out of Valaskjalf and made his way back to his home.

When Frey finally returned to his home in Alfheim, everyone who saw him noticed that the God of Light no longer shined. He seemed to be a prisoner of a dark and depressing sadness. He spoke to no one, and wanted nothing to eat or drink. He could not sleep, and he seemed moody and restless when he was awake. He would not tell anyone what was troubling him. He could not escape the

love that haunted him, nor could he see how he could ever live without fulfilling the desires that were burning white hot within his heart.

When Frey's father, Njord, saw how his son was behaving, he grew concern. Njord called for the shining Skirnir, Frey's servant. He told him to speak with Frey and find out what had happened to make him so depressed? And why he will not open his heart to his friends and family and tell us what is troubling him?

"I will do as you ask," Skirnir said, and he quickly sought out his master.

"Why do you remain in your hall and refuse to speak with anyone, or eat or drink?" Skirnir asked.

"Because all the joy and merriment of the elf-folk that live within my kingdom will not help to cheer me up," Frey said. "Not even the sunbeams of their smiles, or the songs they sing, can drive the blackness from my mind and the cloud from my heart."

"There is no grief so great that you cannot share it with your closest friends," Skirnir said. "And I have been closer to you ever since we played as children. So why can't you unburden yourself to me?"

Frey looked at his friend and servant and tried to smile. Slowly he began to tell Skirnir how he had sat in Odin's high seat and discovered the most beautiful women had ever saw, and how he lost his heart to her. "I cannot believe that such a love as great as mine could possibly be equaled, but such a love, if not fulfilled can only cause gloom and anguish." Frey said. "And I know that our love can never be, for no God would ever agree to such a union, for Gyimir, her father, is the sworn enemy of the Gods."

Skirnir understood, and he felt Frey's pain.

Then Frey turned to Skirnir. "I care not if all the giants and Gods in the nine worlds are against this union," he said. "Please, dear friend, go now as swiftly as you can, and bring Gerd to me. I will give you whatever you need and whatever you desire if you do."

Skirnir smiled and nodded. "I will need your horse, the steed that will not run from magic, and your sword, the sword that will fight against the giants, even if the hand that wields it, falls dead."

Frey did not hesitate to hand over his two greatest treasures; his horse and his sword, even though he would have need of them when he must face the fire-demon, Surtur, at Ragnarok.

Skirnir wasted no time, and leaped on the steed and raced off to Jotunheim. He rode the horse on as fast as it could race. Dirt and stone flew into the air as Skirnir and his steed made their way toward Jotunheim. By evening they had reached the river Iving. After ferrying across the river, they continued on their



way through the darkness of night. Across the endless flat lands they galloped, and then they headed for the coldest regions of giant land. "We must make for Gymir's hall," Skirnir spoke to the horse. "Once there, we shall share the same fate, in the service of our master. We will either convince the lovely Gerd to return to Vanaheim and wed our master, or we will die trying to convince her."

In the darkness of the night they finally reached the mountain pass that led to Gymir's hall, but it was blocked by a curtain of fire. So determined was the rider and steed that Frey's horse never even slowed his pace. He raced right through the flames, to the other side, unhurt. When the night finally retired and daylight reclaimed the land, the shining Skirnir and the horse came to a bowl of a valley filled with fields of gray grass. It was a depressing land, surrounded on all sides by lifeless hills, and covered with huge boulders that seemed to have been piled up intentionally. Located in the center of the depression stood Gymir's hall. It was guarded by a black fence. At the gate were two black hounds. They were held in place by chains.

Skirnir looked about and saw a herdsman sitting on one of the hills. He rode to where the herdsman was sitting. "From where you sit, you can see all that happens in this valley," Skirnir said. "Can you tell me how I might get pass these terrible hounds so I might speak with Gerd?"

The herdsman looked at Skirnir and looked passed him, as if he was not there. "Even if you were a spirit that escaped from Hel itself, you will never get pass those hounds. They guard their mistress well and will not permit any to pass the gate."

Skirnir could see that the herdsman had no intention of helping him. "Unless a man wishes to remain indoors for his entire life, it is better to be brave of heart than cower in fear," Skirnir told the herdsman. "The hour of my death had been ordained. So what do I have to fear?" Skirnir rode off, back to the gates.

When Gerd heard the hounds guarding her gates howling and barking, she asked one of her servants what was causing all the noise.

"A rider is approaching," her servant said. "He has reached the gates and has dismounted. He has sent his horse to graze."

"Then go and welcome him," Gerd said. "My heart tells me that this man is responsible for the death of my brother. But go and welcome him anyway. Bring him mead and show him to me."

Skirnir was able to pass unharmed between the hounds and then he entered the hall. He discovered that it was just as cold inside as it was outside. When he was inside, he found Gerd waiting for him. She was dressed in a snow white gown. She was amazed by the light that shined about Skirnir.

“Are you an elf or a God?” she asked as she greeted him. “How were you able to pass the flickering wall of flames that guard this hall?”

“Neither elf nor God, I am,” Skirnir said, though I was able to pass the wall of fire. He then reached into his pocket and pulled out eleven golden apples. “These I have brought to give to you,” he said as he presented the apples to the giantess. “They are apples of eternal youth, and they are yours to keep if you will return with me to wed my master, Frey.”

Gerd refused the apples. “Never!” she said. Her voice froze the air with her rejection. “You cannot buy my love with apples, even with eternal youth. Even if I was to take the apples, all the years that fill eternity would not be enough for me to learn to love Frey.”

Skirnir reached once more into his pocket, and this time he pulled out the golden ring, Draupnir. “This is the ring, Draupnir. Every ninth night, eight rings just like it, drops from it. I will give this to you if you will learn to love Frey.”

“What good is fertility and family if there is no love between man and wife?” Gerd said. “I will not come back with you.” Her voice was now icy cold and caused Skirnir to shiver.

“I carry this sword, and if you will not come back with me, I’ll use it to cut your head from your lovely neck,” Skirnir now threatened Gerd.

Like a pillar of ice Gerd stood unafraid. “If you would kill me to force me to love Frey, what good would the love of a dead woman be to him? But if you feel that you must use the sword, my father, Gymir will be here soon.”

Frey ignored her reference to her father and raised the sword before him. “If I strike your father with this sword, he will fall before it,” he said.

Gerd stilled refused to surrender. “All the force of arms cannot force love to grow,” she said.

Skirnir then laid down the sword and raised his own staff. “With this staff I will touch you and it will tame you,” Skirnir said. “This staff is a magic staff and it will send you to a place where you will never again see or talk to any man. You will be doomed to live without love or food. You will spend the rest of eternity on a hill overlooking the underworld of Hel. Even the hideous giant Hrimnir will be horrified to look upon you, for your beauty will die. You’ll forever be known as the most hideous witch throughout the nine worlds.

“You will be raked by torment and tears. Your only companion will be loneliness. So lonely you will be that you will pray for death’s embrace. Every day you will drink a double helping from the cup of misery, and you will crawl on your belly through the craggy rocks for no purpose other than to reach your home in Jotunheim. Once there you will be pricked by evil spirits and raped by the frost

giants for their pleasure, and then thrown back to your prison on the hill above Hel.

“While all the worlds laugh with joy, you will weep and cry and be overcome with sadness. You will live with the most heinous three-headed giants and never will you find a husband to love and who will love you. You will be raked with despair as you are trampled under foot like trash in the street.

“With this staff, which was fashioned from a branch torn from Yggdrasil, you will suffer the wrath of the Gods. Odin is enraged with you, and Frey will lose no love for you. Your name will be associated with the worst that is in women.

“Let all who live in the nine worlds hear my curse! Frost and stone giants! The sons of Sotur, listen! Gods of Asgard and Vanaheim, hear me now. Let no man ever develop love for Gerd. The joy of man is forbidden to this woman.

“But there is one who will enjoy the pleasures of your flesh. He is the worst of all giants. Hrimgrinnir is his name and he lives within the gloom that fills Hel’s domain. You will go and live with him in his home under the roots of Yggdrasil. There you will live with the rotting corpses that he feeds on, and the terrible dragon that chews on the world tree’s roots will piss on you. And his urine will be your only nourishment. That is my curse on you, Gerd!”

Skirnir pulled out a charm and held it in his hand. “On this charm I have carved three runes,” Skirnir said to Gerd. “They are longing, madness and lust. But what I have written, I can as easily erase. Whether I do so will depend on your answer.”

Gerd shook with fright at Skirnir’s curse. Finally she lowered her head and succumbed to Skirnir’s demands, and agreed to return with him to Frey. “Skirnir, I will return with you. Drink from the frost-covered mead that I have brought for you.” As Skirnir drank from the cup, Gerd’s fears died and were replaced with a love for the God of Light. “I cannot believe it, but I have fallen under your spell. You must take me to my love—to Frey.”

Skirnir agreed and Gerd insisted that Frey meet her in a forest called Barri. “It is a place of love and peace, and one of the most beautiful places in the universe,” she said. “In nine nights bring the son of Njord to this place. I will be waiting for him there.”

Skirnir agreed and left the hall. He mounted his steed and rode as fast as he could to Frey with the news.

When Frey learned that Skirnir was approaching Asgard, he stood by his hall to await his return. He had not slept all the time that Skirnir was away, and was now impatient and anxious.

When Skirnir reached Frey, his master would not even let him dismount. “Tell me right away, even before you set foot on the ground,” Frey pleaded. “Tell me if you have brought ecstasy or pain with you?”

Skirnir smiled down on Frey. The light from his face shined and brightened all Asgard. “She has agreed to meet you in nine nights, in a place called Barri, deep in the forest. She will surrender herself to you willingly and happily.”

Frey’s heart was mixed with joy and dread. “Nine nights?” he asked. “Even one night away from my love is so painful that I cannot describe it. How can I hope to wait nine nights?”

# 12

## *FREYJA, THE GODDESS OF LOVE AND WAR*

### **I: THE GODDESS OF LOVE AND WAR:**

All's fair in love and war, and so it is with Freyja, the Goddess of love and war. The fairest Goddess of the Northern pantheon of Gods is Freyja. She is the Goddess of beauty and sexuality, as well as the leader of the Valkyries. Her twin brother is Frey and Freyja, and Frey means lady and lord. Her father is Njord and her mother is Nerthus. Along with her father and brother she belongs to that race of Gods that was worshiped by the pre-Indo-Europeans peoples that inhabited Europe, the Vanir. Of all the Goddesses she is the most beloved and beautiful. In Germany she was identified with Frigga, but in the Scandinavian countries she was considered a separate Goddess. Having been born in Vanaheim, Freyja was also referred to as the Vanadis, the Goddess of the Vanas, or the Vanabridge.

Once she reached Asgard, all of the Aesir were bewitched by her loveliness, beauty and grace. They bestowed upon her own realm, Falkvang, and a hall of her own, Sessrymir. As both Goddess of love and war she can be compared to the Roman-Greek Goddess of love, Venus who was married to Mars, the God of war.

Folkvang 'tis called,  
Where Freyja has right  
To dispose of the hall-seats.  
Every day of the slain  
She chooses the half,  
And leaves half to Odin.

NORSE MYTHOLOGY (R. B. Anderson)

Unlike Venus, Freyja was not a soft Goddess who sought only the pleasures of love-making. She was the Goddess of war and Queen of the Valkyries. Her title

was Valfreyja, and she led the Valkyries whenever Odin sent them on their errands to retrieve fallen heroes. Freyja is often depicted wearing battle gear and a helmet, carrying a spear and shield and riding a horse. Other times she is shown wearing sensual and feminine garb. Freyja is given the right to choose half of the fallen heroes to come and live with her in Folkvang. This is where the saying, 'Ladies' first' comes from. Once in Freyja's abode the chosen heroes are entertained, and are joined by their faithful wives. Beautiful maidens who remain pure and devoted to love are also chosen by Freyja. Lovers are reunited in Freyja's domain, and the loves that were meant to be, but never consummated in Midgard, are finally actualized. The prospect of spending eternity in Freyja's Folkvang was so alluring that many women took their own lives so as to share the same faith as their deceased husbands or lovers. Freyja was often evoked by lovers and they composed prayers and poems in her honor to win her favors.

## **II: FREYJA, THE VANADIS:**

One of the many titles Freyja possessed was Vanadis. The Diser were female fertility spirits that were evoked. The Diser were probably female deities belonging to the Vanir. They were called upon to help women give birth and produce large families. Their importance was shown by a festival held in their honor, and Freyja's honor, called the Dusablot. This was usually held around the beginning of Winter, and sometimes known as Mothers' Night. They also had their own temple located in Uppsala, in Sweden. It was known as the Disarsaler, or Hall of the Diser.

## **III: FREYJA, THE SEITHERKONA:**

Like the Sibyl in Rome, Freyja was a prophetess or seeress. The Norse name for this female is Volva or Seitherkona. When Freyja arrived in Asgard, she taught Odin the magic of seither. This is the practice of divination or foretelling the future. By entering a trance-state, one can communicate with spirits and the Gods, or help spirits in the next world. Trances were also used to travel to other worlds. This is sometimes referred to as astral projection.

Seither is usually practiced by women, but a male shaman should also learn the art. For men to practice seither, they should play the role of Odin learning the art from Freyja. Men usually begin by learning galdor and move onto seither, as Odin, while women go on to learn galdor after becoming versed in seither, much as Freyja learned galdor from Odin.

## IV: THE BRISING NECKLACE:

Night was descending upon the nine worlds. The sky was gray and heavy with clouds as snowflakes gently danced on the cold winds out of the north. All Asgard was settling down for the night. No one was about except Loki, snaking in the shadows that filled every neck and corner. He had been waiting for the Goddess. He and he alone bared witness to Freyja, as she left Sessrumnir.

Without a sound Freyja departed without being noticed by anyone sleeping within Sessrumnir. She took neither her cats nor chariot, but instead slipped away, light of foot into the rising night towards the Bifrost Bridge. The Sly One smiled knowingly and quickly followed after the Goddess. As fast as a fire he noiselessly beckoned after Freyja, wrapped in his cloak.

Freyja hurried through the darkening fields, walking as if on air like the morning mist rolling over the landscape, without making a sound. As she moved, Loki could make out the curves of her shapely form beneath her flowing gown.

Soon, Freyja passed over the rainbow bridge and descended to Midgard. The snow was lightly blowing in the winds, glowing in the moonlit night. All night she hurried on, dreaming of gold as she went. The lust for the yellow metal burned within her. She could not understand why, but it seemed to control her every thought and action. She soon found herself crossing barren landscapes, walking all night until the morning sun rose in the east. The sight of the golden orb only caused her longing for the precious metal to grow stronger. At no time did she look back and notice the lusting God of fire close on her heels. His consuming flames of desire fed Freyja's lust for gold.

Freyja finally came to a whining river, filled with icy chunks flowing in its blue currents. Following it to its beginning she eventually came to a wall of bluish ice, that fell in jagged clumps about the foot of an endless glacier, covering the top of the world. Day was now waning early, as it did in the northern regions of Midgard, but Freyja took no notice and continued on her quest. She moved between great boulders and eventually passed under an overlapping cliff. The path she took led her between rising cliffs. Wind now whipped about the walls of ice and stone, causing tears of gold to roll down her fair cheeks. The path now took her to the entrance of a huge craven, filled with blackness and dampness. Freyja came to a halt. She stood, staring into the yawning mouth of darkness. She listened and could hear the distant sounds of dripping water upon the rocks. For a long time she stood there without moving, as if studying the sounds that came from the cavern. Finally, she thought she could detect the sound of water dripping changing. It began to sound like metal tapping against metal. It appeared to come from

deep within the cave. It seemed far away, but it was there. The tapping made her blood race through her, and her heart to pound faster. Freyja was drawn to the sounds of hammering. Then when she could stand it no longer, like a wraith, her white form disappeared into the consuming darkness within the cavern. She had entered Svartalfheim.

As she passed through the cavern, she was compelled forward by the continuous sound of tapping hammers. Like a cat in the night, she moved through the darkness, sure-footed and unafraid. For a long time she continued to pass down through the darkness until, finally, she stepped out into a sweltering smithy, filled with fire and smoke. There, busy at their work were four grotesque dwarfs, Alfrigg, Dvalin, Berling and Geer.

The furnace burped with sparks and smoke as the dwarfs hammered their skills into the marvelous device they were working on. Freyja stared in fascination, trying to see what the four diminutive creatures were shaping. Then, as one of the dwarfs raised and held the device up and admired it, Freyja gasped in astonishment at the work of art and magic the dwarfs had fashioned. Its jewels glittered in wondrous patterns of light and colors, and its golden links were made of fluid golden metallic weaves that interlaced in the intricate patterns that it seemed almost alive. Freyja never and such a wondrous necklace and she instantly knew that she must possess it.

The dwarfs stared at the Goddess, as she shimmered in the glowing light of the furnace. Their dark and contorted faces leered at the vision of beauty standing before them. Freyja was breathing hard with excitement as she stared at the device the dwarfs held. Her breasts rose and fell under her silken gown. The heat of the smithy caused her to sweat, making her gown wet. It clung to the curves of her exquisite form, revealing the womanly sensuality of the figure. She wet her lips with her tongue, at the thought of possessing the necklace. The dwarfs had never seen such an image of beauty and sensuality before. Never before did they feel such lust for any woman. Dwarf-hearts were moved by gold, silver and jewels. Now, for the first time they knew they must have this Goddess that stood before them.

Freyja, now noticed the dwarfs leering at her. She took a step forward and smiled at the four little creatures. Without asking for an introduction, she spoke to them. "Is that necklace for sale? I would buy it from you," she said.

The four dwarfs exchanged glances among themselves and shook their heads. Gerr finally said. "Sorry. But it's not for sale."

"But I must have it," Freyja said. Her voice remained sweet and intoxicating like wine. "I will pay you in gold and silver, as much as you want. Will you sell it



to me?" Her words were sweet and innocent. She took several more steps towards the necklace, as if it called to her.

The dwarfs grimaced. "We have more gold and silver than we could possibly need," said one of the dwarfs.

"What do we need with more gold and silver?" another asked.

Freyja continued to stare at the necklace, as if she didn't hear what the dwarfs had said. It seemed hypnotic. She wanted to reach out and touch it. The hunger she felt for the necklace hurt. "But I must have it. What is your price?"

The four dwarfs began to speak in whispers among themselves as they huddled in a conference, so she could not hear what they were saying. Finally, they stopped and faced her once more.

"The necklace belongs to all four of us. What one owns, we all own," one of the dwarfs said, leering at Freyja.

"If you want to buy it, you will have to pay all of us equally," another dwarf said, as he rubbed his hands together and licked his lips.

"Yes," another dwarf said. His little red eyes looked Freyja up and down, carefully examining the Goddess. "We will sell it to you, but not for gold and silver."

Freyja seemed surprised at the dwarf's declaration. She tilted her head and stared down on the twisted little creature. "What then is your price?"

One of the dwarfs' eyes opened wide, and his crooked mouth stretched into a malicious smile. "You. We want you," he finally said.

Freyja stepped back. Indignation flickered through her, causing her cheeks to redden with embarrassment. Her breasts rose and fell as she took heavy breaths, but she did not speak—could not speak.

"You must agree to lie with each of us for one night. Only after you have surrendered yourself to each of us in turn, will the necklace be yours," said the dwarfs.

Freyja recoiled in horror at the dwarfs' proposal. She stared at them with revulsion. She found their ugly dark faces, their rat-like little eyes, their misshapen bodies and twisted, matted hair disgusting. The thought of them touching her caused her to shiver. She was sickened by the thought of lying with such foul creatures. She wanted to reject their offer, but suddenly, an urge began to swell up from deep within her. The desire to possess the necklace soon overcame her and robbed her of her good senses. What were four nights? she thought to herself. Afterwards the necklace would belong to her forever. There was silence, heavy and oppressive, broken only by the occasional crackling of the fires in the furnace. The dwarfs were like stone. Their greedy, little, red eyes were fixed on

her. Finally, Freyja seem to slump and surrendered to her need to possess the necklace.

“I agree. I will do as you ask,” she murmured shamelessly. “Do with me as you please.”

For four days and nights the dwarfs took turns defiling the Goddess. One by one they satisfied their lust with the Goddess. When the four days and nights finally passed, the dwarfs proved to be as good as their word and presented Freyja with the necklace. She sat silently as they fastened it about her white throat. When the necklace finally, belong to her, Freyja wasted not a single second longer in the dwarfs’ domain, and raced out of there. Out of the cavern she hurried, across the barren lands of Midgard until she finally crossed over the rainbow bridge. Close behind was her shadow. Loki had watched Freyja defile herself with the four dwarfs, and now he followed her back to the realm of the Gods. He did not halt until he saw Freyja disappear into the darkened hall of Sessrinnir. She was still clutching the necklace under her cloak.

After Freyja disappeared into her hall, Loki went straight to Odin’s hall. When Loki arrived, he found the All-Father sitting all alone in Valaskjalf. His only companions were his two ravens, perched on his shoulders, and his two wolves lying at his feet. When Loki approached, the wolves raised their heads and growled.

“Why have you come here so late at night?” Odin asked.

Loki smiled as he eyed Odin’s wolves.

“I always know when you have learned some damaging news,” Odin said. “I can read it on your face. What mischief are you up to?”

“If your one eye is all-seeing, then you must have seen what I saw,” Loki said. His eyes twinkled with delight at his logic, and his crooked mouth twisted into a wicked smile. “Did you not see it all for yourself, oh all-seeing Odin?”

“See what?” asked Odin.

“What she was up to?” Loki said.

“Who?” asked Odin.

“Who?” Loki repeated Odin’s question. “You did not see it all from your High Seat, Hlidskjalf?”

“What are you talking about?” Odin was now rapidly growing angry with the Sly One’s word game. “Speak up and tell me what you want to say or leave.”

Loki bowed slightly. “As you wish, oh terrible One, but only because you command me to. I’m referring to the Goddess you love best and lust after the most. I saw what beautiful Freyja has been up to in the pass four days and

night—how she gave herself to four dwarfs. How she surrendered her body to their lust.”

Odin rose to his feet and stared at Loki. “Enough! Still your lying tongue, Master of Lies!” Odin shouted.

Loki ignored Odin’s command. He could see the All-Father was consumed with a jealousy that robbed him of his wits. Loki proceeded to describe in detail everything Freyja did with all four dwarfs, and took great delight in shaming the Goddess. He enjoyed the pain that Freyja’s self-debasement caused Odin.

“I want proof of what you say is true, Loki,” Odin demanded. “If you cannot back up your accusations with hard evidence. If you do not, I’ll skin you alive, myself.”

“What proof would you have?” Loki asked.

“Bring me the necklace you spoke of,” Odin demanded. “If what you say is true, Freyja would not let the necklace out of her sight, not even when she is asleep. You are to take it from her and bring it to me.”

“But to do as you command, I’ll have to break into Freyja’s hall, and it’s impossible to enter her hall without her permission,” Loki said. “How am I to bring you the necklace if I can’t reach her?”

“That’s your problem!” Odin shouted. Thunder cracked in the distance. His wolves rose to their feat and waited for their master’s command to attack. “Odin’s face was contorted with hate for the Trickster. “Bring it to me before the sun rises or never let me lay my eye on you again.”

Loki looked at Odin’s face and knew why he possessed the names, the Terrible One and Evil Doer. His fiery blood turned ice cold and he shivered before the All-Father. Loki bowed low and began to back away. “As you wish, Odin. I’ll do it at once.”

The wolves growled once more at Loki, who now turned and fled out of Odin’s hall into the night. He did not stop running until he reached Freyja’s hall. When he did, he first tried the door, only to find it locked.

Loki stood outside of Freyja’s hall for a long time, trying to figure out the best means of invading Sessrumnir. The cold, night air whipped about him, but he didn’t move. He rapped his cloak about him as his black mind began to think about a means of penetration. Eventually, he remembered the time he stole Sif’s beautiful gold hair. He had transformed himself into a tiny fly. His crooked mouth was now twisted into a wicked smile. The Shape Changer began quietly repeating a spell that transformed him into a fly.

He began buzzing about the great hall, examining every nook and crack, but as hard as he tried he could not find even the slightest opening for him to pass

through. He buzzed about the roof, up and down the walls and even checked every keyhole, but without any luck. For over two hours he flew about looking for even the smallest opening that could afford him entrance into Freyja's hall. He struggled against the wind that blew hard in the night air, and only the fear of Odin's wrath kept him trying. Then, as he rested on a gable, he spied the smallest crack in the stones, right under the roof. Loki slithered and twisted his way through the crack, which was smaller than a hairline crack, but the Trickster was able to contort his form until he finally passed through the wall and was inside the hall. He began to check and see if any of Freyja's servants and daughters were still awake. When he was convinced that everyone was asleep, he proceeded to Freyja's sleeping chamber. He found the Goddess fast asleep in her bed with the necklace firmly fastened around her throat. Flying over her, he could see that the clasp was hidden under her neck and out of reach.

Loki transformed himself once again. This time he became a flea. Unable to resist temptation, he amused himself by crawling about Freyja's body, violating her breasts and then moved up her neck. He finally reached her cheek where he stung her white skin.

Freyja moaned and turned onto her side without waking. When she settled once again, Loki could clearly see the clasp. He could now easily reach it. After waiting to make sure Freyja was still sound asleep, the Shape Changer resumed his own form once more. Standing beside her bed, he leaned over Freyja and with the skill of a master thief. Ever so gently, he released the clasp with the efficacy of a pickpocket. He pulled the necklace from around her throat. In all the nine worlds there was not another thief who could even come close to matching Loki's skills as a thief. Like a shadow in the night he silently departed from Freyja's bed-chamber and fled her hall into the night.

When Freyja woke the next morning, she immediately reached for her necklace, only to discover, to her horror that it was gone. She leaped to her feet and looked around. Her pale skin grew red from anger at the thievery that was perpetrated upon her. She looked around and discovered the doors to her hall were unlocked, and there were no signs of forced entry. She knew instantly that the only one who was cunning enough to have entered her hall without forcing his way in was Loki. Her anger soon turned to grief as the realization that Loki would never have dared to enter her hall uninvited, unless he was ordered by Odin himself. Her secret had been discovered and she began weeping. Freyja decided to go immediately to the All-Father and beg for mercy, but what she did not realize was that Odin knew all about her guilt and greed, and how she had betrayed her birthright by sleeping with the dwarfs.

When Freyja finally reached Valaskjalf, she was confronted by Odin. Her grief soon turned once again to anger and she demanded if Odin knew what became of her necklace. “Someone entered my hall uninvited, and stole my necklace,” she said. “There is only one crafty enough to achieve this feat, but he would not have dared this thievery without your sanction. If you are responsible for Loki taking my necklace, you have debased yourself.”

“Who are you to accuse someone else of self-debasement?” Odin said. “You act of debasement with four dwarfs has brought shame on yourself and all the Gods and your husband, Odur. You betrayed your birthright for sheer greed. You sold your body to four dwarfs for a necklace.”

The truth of Odin’s word struck at Freyja’s heart like an arrow. Her defiance broke and she slumped to the floor, as she reached out for Odin. She confessed all and began weeping a shower of golden tears for his forgiveness. Odin grabbed her arm and pushed her aside.

Freyja begged Odin for the return of the necklace.

“Your husband has left you,” Odin said. “He has fled in grief at your shame and betrayal. You will never see him again. Do you not care for the love that you have lost? Is your concern only for the necklace?”

“No,” Freyja said, now realizing for the first time the magnitude of her crime. “And I will never rest until I find my beloved Odur and ask him for his forgiveness for the great wrong that I have done him, and to all the Gods. I will leave Asgard and seek him out, even if I must pass through all nine worlds.”

The terrible One stared at the Goddess. “I will give the necklace back to you, but on one condition. Wherever you go on your quest, you must stir up hatred and war. You must pit nations against nations and cause the battlefields to run red with rivers of blood. And then, you are to use your spells to cause the dead to rise again and kill each other all over again. Everyone must know that the crime you have committed is so great that there is nothing that can undo it. Do you agree?”

Freyja said nothing. The horror of Odin’s words caused her tongue to be still. She closed her eyes and nodded in agreement.

“There I will give you your necklace, and you are to wear it for all time to remind you of what you have done,” Odin commanded. “But I tell you this—all your penance will not restore your lost love to you. Even you cannot raise that from the dead.”

When Odin called on Loki to return the necklace to Freyja, he discovered that the Trickster had fled with the necklace. Odin summoned his son Heimdall, the Guardian of Asgard, and asked him if he could see where Loki had gone.

Heimdall looked out upon the nine worlds and then turned back to his father. “Yes, the son of fire has crossed the rainbow bridge, taking the necklace with him. He left early this morning, not long after Odur had departed. Odur I cannot see, but I see Loki hiding by the rocks of the island, Singasten. He has transformed himself into a seal.”

“Then go and take the necklace from Loki,” Odin commanded. “Bring it back to Asgard and clasp it upon the throat of Freyja. I charge you with the task of ensuring that no one else ever removes it from her neck again.”

Heimdall bowed and departed to carry out Odin’s orders. When he finally reached the island of Singasten, he called out to Loki. “Son of Suttur, I know you are hiding among these rocks, and in what form you have disguised yourself. In the name of Odin, give it up and surrender yourself, and turn over to me the Brisingamen—the Brising Necklace!”

But Loki did not do as he was commanded. He laughed to himself as he hid in the waters beneath the rocks.

Heimdall did not wait long and transformed himself into a seal and dived into the sea. He swam down into the waters until he found Loki and attacked him. Heimdall and Loki fought ferociously, biting and ripping at each other, but Loki was clearly outmatched by the Defender of Asgard. Loki surrendered and Heimdall brought him and the necklace back to Asgard.

Odin took the necklace from Loki and gave to Freyja. Once the necklace was fastened about her neck, she quickly departed in her quest for her lost love.

## **V: THE MEANING OF THE BRISING NECKLACE:**

This story is a lesson on the importance of maintaining the purity of both the flesh and the spirit. Lust (Freyja) is often driven to seek material pleasures by desire (Loki). When our lust is unchecked by the need to preserve the greater good, it leads us away from our folk into the dark world of Svartalfheim, just as Freyja was taken there. She craved the Brising Necklace, which was made of gold and precious jewels, symbols of material wealth, success and advancement. Freyja is driven by an alien need to place her individual lust before the greater good by the alien Loki. She must have the necklace at any cost. She is even willing to sell her birthright and surrender her virtue for the necklace. She debases herself for four days and night with four dwarfs, but fools herself into thinking that it does not matter—that she will not have to answer for her crime. But once the truth of

her deeds are revealed (she is betrayed by the very desire that drove her to commit her debasement) she discovers that she has traded true love for wealth.

Odin is devastated and although he can forgive her, his love for her is forever lost. The person of Odur is actually the personification of Odin's love for Freyja. Odin is not just the personification of individual love, but of the whole folk. Freyja is driven this way by her actions. Her crime has resulted in death and destruction to whole nations, and she will eventually lose the material wealth she craved through the shedding of golden tears on her endless quest to find what she has lost.

## VI: FREYJA AND ODUR:

Freyja was depicted as possessing white skin, blue eyes and yellow hair like the sun. She was the greatness of the Goddesses and of the Vanir. She sometimes was depicted as the personification of the earth, because the Vanir are fertility and nature deities. Her husband was named Odur, and he was a symbol of the Summer sun. Odur is also another name for Odin and represents Odin's love, or lust for Freyja. Odur is the lustful side of love, while Odin is wedded to Frigga. Odin/Odur are two aspects of love, romance/lust. Odur is considered the personification of passion and the enrapturing pleasures of love making.

Freyja loves Odur dearly and had two daughters named Hnoss (treasure or jewel) and Gersimi (treasure or precious object) by him. Freyja's two daughters are considered symbols of all things beautiful.

Freyja loved being with Odur and whenever he was around, she always smiled and was always happy. But this bliss didn't last. They made love under the myrtle tree and myrtle is still used to decorate brides in northern Europe during their wedding. Whenever they made love, all nature blossomed with joy. Flowers became more colorful, trees grew straighter and their branches were filled with leaves, berries, nuts and fruit. The dew was sweeter and the rain gentler. All nature seemed brighter and was filled with life.

Driven by the desire to possess the Brising necklace by Loki, she betrayed her husband with four dwarfs. This drove Odur mad with grief and he left Freyja to wander the world suffering from a broken heart. After Odur left Freyja in pain and shame, nature lost its luster and color and sunk into Winter's bitter embarrassment. The world became mournful and grey with sorrow. Freyja descended to Midgard in search of her husband. She could not contain her grief and wept endlessly. Her tears fell to the earth and burrowed into the ground where they turned into gold nuggets. When they dropped into the sea, they were trans-

formed into translucent amber. On her journey she traveled through many lands and was known by different names, including Gefn, Mardel, Syr, Skialf and Thrung.

The prettiest flowers are considered Freyja's or Freyja's eye dew. The butterfly is sometimes referred to as Freyja's hen. Sometimes Freyja visited her twin brother, Frey in Alfheim where she loved to watch the elves and fairies dance in the moonlight. She rewarded them with sweet honey and the daintiest flowers.

Being the most sensual and beautiful of all Goddesses, all desired Freyja, Gods, giants and dwarfs. Many giants and dwarfs tried to win her or force the Gods to surrender her to them, but Freyja always scorned these attempts. She was not so intractable when it came to the Gods. She is supposed to have wedded Odin (the sky), to Odur (the sunshine) and to Frey (the Summer rain), and according to Loki's accusations made at Aegir's festival in honor of Balder, she is supposed to have slept with all the Gods of Asgard and Vanaheim.

Freyja is the Goddess of love, especially sensual love. Sexuality, copulation and fertility are her specialities. Her twin brother, Frey is sometimes referred to as her husband and the two are depicted as riding a golden boar. Freyja rides the boar through the grove scattering fruits and flowers and inflaming the hearts of men and women with love and desire. She also rides a chariot pulled by two cats. Sometimes they are grey and other times black. The cat is the symbol of her sensuality and caressing tenderness that ignite the passions of lovemaking. They are the symbols of Freyja's fecundity.

## VII: HYNDLA:

Freyja was not only a Goddess that people called upon for success in affairs of the heart or prosperity. She was sometimes asked for her protection. Those who served her truly and lovingly always could count upon her assistance. She loved those who honored her and was always faithful to them. The tale of Ottar and Angantyr is a good example of how Freyja could be counted upon for help. The two men were disputing a piece of property. Unable too resolved their dispute, they took it before the Thing. The popular assembly decided that they would award the property in dispute to whichever man could prove they were descended from a great line of nobles.

Ottar was unable to remember the names of more than just a few of his descendants. Unable to find the names of his progenitors, he sought the assistance of Freyja. His family had for many generations belonged to Freyja's cult and so he gave sacrifice to honor her and called upon her for help. Freyja heard



his plead for assistance and decided to act. She appeared before Ottar and turned him into a boar, and then rode his back to the land of giants.

In a dark and gloomy cave deep within the mountains lived a giantess by the name of Hyndla. Freyja rode her board across the vast wilderness to Hyndla's cave. She stopped and dismounted her boar when she reached the entrance of the cave. Before entering, she stood and listened and could hear the giantess snoring and it wasn't a pretty sound to listen to. Freyja called out to Hyndla. "Hyndla, this is Freyja, your friend! Are you asleep? Wake up and come greet your friend."

The snoring stopped and Freyja heard a terrible howling from inside. It was the sound of Hyndla yawning.

"Hurry, Hyndla," Freyja called into the cave. "It's getting late and darkness is descending. I've come to take you back to Odin. We must win his favor. I need you to help me trace Ottar's genealogy back to Odin. You have the best memory, so I've come for your assistance. If you come, I know I can convince Odin to bestow his favors upon me. He is renown for his generosity. To Hermond he gave his helmet and coat of mail. To Sigmund he gave his sword. To some he gives gold and to other he bestows glory and victory in battle. Others he gave wisdom, to sailors he sends the winds, to poets he gave the craft of poetry and word-skill, and gives courage and stout hearts to heroes." Freyja paused and listened for Hyndla, but she heard nothing. "If you come, I'll speak to Thor and asked him to always look kindly on you. You know how little he thinks of giant women, but he will do this for me."

Finally, Hyndla appeared at the entrance of the cave. She was ugly and gruesome to behold. Bent over and dressed in an old sack, she shuffled about and stared at the Goddess with her beady eyes.

"Call one of your wolves forward so you may ride him alongside me back to Asgard. My Boar cannot carry us both," Freyja said.

Hyndla laughed wickedly. "That is not your boar, but your lover. That is the man named Ottar. You are riding your lover and you can't even admit it to me. Why should I return to Asgard with you when you can't even tell me the truth?"

"Freyja refused to be caught in a lie. "You have lived too long in that black cave. This is my golden board, Hildisvini, and his golden bristles chase the darkness away with its light as we travel. He was made by the dwarfs Dain and Nabbi, and given to my brother."

Hyndla didn't answer. She huffed and smeared and was about to return into her cave, but Freyja would not let her. She continued to haggle and cajole the giantess and finally threatened her that if she did not do as she demanded and

return with her to Asgard. Knowing Freyja's reputation as a Goddess of war, the witch-giant acquiesced to Freyja's demand.

"I know your renown for battle," Hyndla said as she nodded her head. "I will go with you to see Odin, but I go because I fear for my head."

Then Hyndla called for one of her wolves and mounted him. She rode along side Freyja as they raced back to Asgard as fast as the wind. When they reached the gates to the home of the Aesir, they dismounted. The deer Heidrun who was grazing nearby with waters streaming from his horns, dashed away in fear at the sight of the giantess and her wolf.

Freyja led Hyndla along the road that ran along the river Thund. The boar walked behind them. "Ottar and Angantyr, both men were fathered by the Gods," Freyja said. "I have come in Ottar's name because he has remained faithful to me. An altar of stones he built, and now they have turned to glass. The altar is red with the red of many oxen. Before we reach Odin, you must recall the ancestry of two heros," Freyja ordered. "Tell me now the names of their ancestors and all their descendants. Who are Sjoldings, Skilfings, Othlings and Ylfings?"

Hyndla stopped in her tracks and stared at Freyja. She then looked at the boar following behind her and grinned. "You, Ottar are the son of Instein, who is the son of Alf the Olf, who is the son of Ulf of Saefari. Saefari's father was Svan the Red, foolish Ottar!"

The boar grunted, raised his head and wiggled its nose.

Hyndla began to describe his mother's lineage. "Your mother was a priestess named Hledis. Her father was named Frodi and her mother was Friauf. Her family ranked among the noblest. Friauf's mother was called Hildigun, who was daughter to Svava and Saekonung. This is your lineage, Ottar. I hope you can remember it all, foolish Ottar!"

The boar listened without making any noise.

"Yes. I will continue," Hyndla said. "Hildigun's husband was named Ketil and he was grandfather to your mother through her mother's line. Kari is descended through Frodi and Hoalf came to be from Hild. Next came Nanna, the beautiful daughter of Nokkvi. She had a son who married your father's sister. That family line is ancient and descends back a very long time, foolish Ottar!"

"You have other kinsmen and they are Isulf and Osulf, sons of the mighty Olmod. Olmod's wife was called Skurhold and she was the daughter of Skekli. These kinsmen of yours were great heroes and held in high respect by many, foolish Ottar!"

"On the island of Bolmsoe there lived a couple, Arngrim and Eyfura. They had twelve sons and all of them dedicated themselves to Odin. So Odin turned

them into Beserker. Their names were Hervard, Hjorvard, Hrani, Angantyr, Bui, brami, Barri, Reifnir, Tind, Tyrfin and two named Hadding. All of them spread fear and terror in the hearts of Odin's enemies. These too, are your ancestors, foolish Ottar!

"But the list does not end there," Hyndla said as she pointed a crooked finger at Ottar. "Long ago lived Jormunrek, and he had many sons. All his sons were sacrificed to the Gods. He was also a kinsman to the brave Sigurd. Now, you know that Sigurd was the slayer of the dragon, Fafnir. Sigurd was Volsung's grandson, and his mother was Hjordis of the family named Hraudungs. Eylimi was her father's name and he was an Othling. All of them were your ancestor, foolish Ottar!

"Sigurd had a wife named Gudrun. She was the daughter of Hogni and he was the son of Gjuki and Grimhild. This couple had two other sons, Gunnar and Gottorm and they were all your ancestors, foolish Ottar!

Now let me tell you of Hjorvard who had a daughter named Hvedna and a son named Haki. Harald War Tooth's mother was Aud and his father was Hrorek the Ring Giver. Aud the Profound was the daughter of Ivar, and she was married to Rathbard. This couple had a son named Randver. They were all your kinsmen, foolish Ottar!"

Freyja smiled because she knew that giants were the keepers of past, and all things that happened were known to them. "Ottar and Angantyr made a wager to settle a dispute," Freyja said. "They have staked both their inheritances on who had the noblest family lines. Now let my boar drink of your memory-beer that he might pass on all that you have recited to Ottar, so he can win the wager."

Hyndla turned away from Freyja and began to lie down. "I want to sleep. All this remembering has made me sleepy. I won't do any more favors for you. You can leap around all night like Heidrun frolicking with the goats." Hyndla yawned and stretched as sleep overcame her.

Freyja had no intension of letting the giant go to sleep now. She raised her arms and began reciting a spell. "If you so much as close one eye, I will encase you in flames so that you will never leave this place without burning to death."

Hyndla laughed at Freyja. "Go and cavort with the goats or with the Gods. The choice is yours, Freyja, but leave me to my sleep."

Freyja shouted a spell and the air itself burst into flames. Fire danced in the air about the giantess, drawing close to her until she could not move.

"I'm imprisoned in a ring of fire," Hyndla cried. "Please, don't burn me. I will do as you say." She pulled a drinking skin from under her sack-garment and flung

it over the flames into Freyja's hands. "Take the memory-beer. Give it to your boar-lover. So much good it will do him."

Freyja smiled and let the boar drink of the beer. Then she transformed Ottar back into his man-form and sent him off to the Thing. There, he easily recited his pedigree, naming so many ancestors that he readily beat Angantyr in the wager and was awarded all of the property.

# 13

## *HEIMDALL: THE WATCHMAN OF THE GODS*

### **I: THE WATCHMAN OF THE GODS:**

Heimdall was known as the White God, because he wore an armor of white metal that shined brightly. And he was armed with a flashing sword of similar brilliance. The armor and sword, called Hofuth (Man-Head, which could be considered the penis and this, a phallic symbol, associating it with the family tree) was Heimdall's charge as defender of the Life-Force that both the Gods and mankind shared in common. On his head he wore a helmet with ram horns, and he can transform himself into a ram. The color, white, represents the purity of heart, mind and body that are necessary to maintain the bond between man and the Gods. This is why Heimdall was also known as the light, innocent and graceful God. Heimdall never argued or caused bedlam and for this he was loved and for being good as well as beautiful. There is much in the nature of Heimdall that he has in common with Balder. Heimdall can be considered the pre-Balder generator, or protector of the Life-Force, while Balder is the regenerator, or preserver of the Life-Force. Like Balder, he is sometimes referred to as a sun God. Both Balder and Heimdall are the nurturing and life-giving nature of fire. This makes them the opposite of Loki, the fire-etin, who is the destructive nature of fire. Heimdall fights Loki and later the two kill each other, and Loki is responsible for Balder, but Balder triumphs in the end because he rises from Hel after Ragnarok.

Heimdall's origin is associated with the sea. For this reason, he is sometimes considered one of the Vanir. But Heimdall is the son of Odin. While Odin was walking along the seashore, he beheld nine beautiful giantesses or water-nymphs sound asleep on the white sands of the beach. Their names were Gialp, Greip, Egja, Augeia, Ulfrun, Aurgjafa, Sindur, Atla and Iarnsaxa. They were the daughters of Aegir. The nine sea maidens are the currents of the seas, like the currents of the generations of man—the genetic link that connects us all to our ancestors

and thus, with the Gods. They can also be considered the many nations that make up the family of the European Folk. Odin was so bewitched by the beauties that he seduced all nine of them and impregnated them. Odin mixed his Life-Force with that of gene pool of the Folk of the Indo-Europeans or Indo-Aryans. Before they gave birth, the combined into one being and gave birth to a son, who Odin named Heimdall.

The nine sea maidens nourished their son on the earth's strength and endurance, the sea's fluid and moisture, the sky's winds and freshness and the sun's heat and light. This diet of the four elements caused Heimdall to rapidly grow into his full manhood in an incredibly short time, so he could take his place with his father and the other Gods. When he was a child, he was sent to Midgard and grew up to be a teacher among men. He was called Scef. He was given one of Odin's twelve High Seats in his hall.

In the past, Heimdall has been referred to as a sun God, a moon God, a ram God and even a woodpecker God. He has been interpreted as the essence of Yggdrasil and the rainbow, and has been compared with the Hindu fire God, Agni, the Iranian God, Mithras, the Roman God, Janus and was transformed by the Christians into Saint Michael, the Archangel. Heimdall has even been associated with the angel, Gabriel by the Christians. But this should be interpreted as Heimdall having a Christian origin. Heimdall is an ancient God and has always been associated with the horn in his capacity as the sentinel of Asgard. Heimdall might actually belong to a very ancient God that predates the arrival of the Indo-Europeans. He has similarities with the Finno-Ugric Gods who, like Heimdall, include a white God who is the progenitor of man.

Heimdall's pre-Christian origin is proven by the similarities with the very ancient Hindu fire God, Agni. The resemblances are many and too close to be coincidental. Agni is a pure, white God, young, strong and with golden teeth. Agni has searching eyes that see in the darkness of the night, and he is the guardian of order, and always attentive. Agni protects the world, night and day and never sleeps, always watchful. He can make himself heard like thunder and is the son of two, seven, nine and sometimes ten mothers. All these traits he shares in common with Heimdall. Agni also fathered the human nations and founded the classes or castes of man, just as Heimdall found the different nations or classes of man.

Heimdall is also called Rig, and in this form he traveled from nation to nation creating the divisions of mankind. The name Rig is a Celtic word for king. The Celts also had a God, Manannan mac Lir and his son Mongan. Manannan is a

Celtic God of the sea, and Mongan is the Son of the Sea, who traveled about the world begetting children.

## II: THE BIFROST BRIDGE:

When man looks at the sky and sees that multicolored rainbow stretching across the heavens, they see the entranceway to the realm of the Gods. The rainbow was seen as the bridge that the Gods erected between the heavens and the earth. At one edge was Niflheim, where it rose out of the waters of the Urdar Well, at the foot of the Yggdrasil. It arched high above Midgard, the sacred bridge led to Asgard. In Asgard, the bridge ends at the Well of Mimir, where Mimir remained on guard. It had many names. Asabru, the Rainbow, The Swaying Road to Heaven, The Fleeting Glimpsed Rainbow and the Multi-Colored Way. It was built from fire, water and air, and its colors quivered and changed its hues. The Gods used it as a highway among the nine worlds. Daily, the Gods set out, riding across the bridge to hold council at the Urdar Well. The only God that never crossed the bridge was Thor, for the heat of his thunderbolts and his great strength was so powerful that it was feared that if he tried to cross the bridge, it would collapse under his weight.

The beauty of the bridge was such that the Gods feared the giants would try and cross and break into Asgard. Long the Gods debated how to best guard the entrance of Asgard, and eventually decided on selecting a guard to stand watch and sound the warning if the giants attempt to invade Asgard. It was Heimdall who gladly volunteered to keep a vigilant watch over the rainbow bridge. It was the duty of Heimdall to keep watch over the bridge, night and day. It was his task to ensure that no unwelcome guest should enter Asgard uninvited. The other Gods bestow upon Heimdall senses so acute that he could hear grass growing on the opposite side of the world, and the wool on the sheep's back. His eyesight was just as powerful, and could see to the ends of the universe. And to make sure that no one ever sneaked by him, he need not sleep. He was armed with a great horn called the Gjallar Horn. He had only to make the slightest breath into the horn for it to unleash a sound so deafening that it could wake all nine worlds with one blast.

“To battle the Gods are called  
By the ancient  
Gjallar-horn.  
Loud blows Heimdall,

His sound is in the air.”  
Saemund’s Edda (Thorpe’s tr.)

Heimdall kept the horn close at hand by suspending it from a branch of Yggdrasil, above his head. It was considered the symbol of the crescent moon. Part of the horn actually dipped into Mimir’s Well and laid next to Odin’s eye, which is the symbol of the full moon.

Located near the Bifrost Bridge, on a high hill, was located Heimdall’s hall, Himinbjorg (The Rocks of Heaven). The Gods often came to this hall and joined Heimdall in drinking a wondrous mead that he brewed.

Heimdall’s teeth were golden and his smile, the brightest. He was sometimes called Gullintani (Golden-toothed). He also owned a horse. It was now white in color and possessed a mane of gold. Its name was Hull-top and it bore him over the rainbow bridge, which he crossed many times a day as he patrolled the heavenly bridge.

### III: HEIMDALL, LOKI AND FREYJA:

Heimdall was standing watch one night when he heard the sound of soft footprints coming from the direction of Freyja’s palace, Sessrumnir, thanks to his acute sense of hearing. The Watchman of Asgard turned his gaze toward Sessrumnir. Even in the darkness of night he could clearly make out the image of Loki sneaking about Freyja’s domain. He continued to watch as Loki transformed himself into a fly and buzz about the palace until he finally found a way in. It was not long before when he saw Loki come charging out of the palace with Freyja’s Brisingamen, the emblem of the fruitfulness of the Children of the Gods.

Heimdall saw the entire theft and Loki’s get away. Nothing can hide itself from Heimdall’s sight, not even the King of Thieves. Heimdall immediately set out in pursuit of the midnight thief. As fast as Loki could run, he could not stay ahead of Heimdall. In no time Heimdall was upon Loki. Overtaking him, he withdrew his sword and swung to cut off the trickster’s head. But before Heimdall’s blade made contact with Loki, the fire-etin transformed himself into flickering flames. As quick as thought, Heimdall changed himself into a rain cloud and unleashed a quenching rain upon Loki. Loki transformed himself once more, this time into a huge polar bear. He opened his jaws and swallowed the rain water. Not to be outdone, Heimdall also assumed the form of a bear and attacked Loki. The battle was fierce and brutal and Loki was about to be overpowered by Heimdall when he transformed himself once more. This time he took the form of a seal



and dived into the ocean, but he could not escape. Heimdall also became a seal and followed Loki into the ocean where he finally was able to corner him and capture him. Heimdall was able to retrieve the necklace and return it, and Loki to Asgard.

In this tale, Loki is the alien who invades the Folk and steals the regenerative powers of the Folk by violating Freyja, the symbol of the Folk's reproductive powers. Heimdall is the Watchman of the Asgard, and he is also the Guardian of the Life-Force that is shared in common by the Gods and the Folk. He chases down the alien influence that seeks to rob the Folk of its ability to reproduce and thus procreate and survive into the future. But Heimdall is there to strike down the foe of the Folk and restore the reproductive powers to the Folk.

## **V: HEIMDALL'S NAMES:**

Heimdall has several names by which the peoples of Europe identified him. Two of these names were Irmin and Hallinskide. In these disguises he takes Odin's place and is identified with him. Other names that are associated with Heimdall are Er, Heru, and Cheru. All these names are of sword-Gods and this forms a bond with Tyr. Both Tyr and Heimdall possess shining swords. Heimdall is also known as the Wanderer of the Rainbow, the Guardian of the Life-Force, the Watchman of Asgard, the God of Heaven, and the God of the Fruitful Rains.

The most important name associated with Heimdall is that of Rig. In this form Heimdall traveled to Midgard and created the different divisions of mankind.

## **VI: RIG, THE STORY OF THE DIVISION OF MANKIND:**

There is a God who can hear grass growing and wool growing on the back of sheep. There is a God who needs hardly any sleep and can see the protons and electrons in an atom, and can see the farthest stars in the sky.

What is the name of this God? It is Heimdall.

One day, long ago at the being of time Heimdall left his station at the rainbow bridge and descended down to Midgard. When he stepped off the rainbow bridge, he took a disguise so that no one would recognize him. Midgard was very young and mankind had just made its appearance. Heimdall began walking along a seashore, across the grass-covered ground. For a long time he journeyed. He

watched the wolf chased the sun across the sky many times. Finally he reached the edge of the southern part of the world, where the earth melted into the waves of the sea.

Heimdall finally spied a turf hut, rundown and dilapidated. It looked like it could fall at the slightest breeze. He approached the hut and knocked on the old door. When no one answered, he swung the door open. He had to stoop down to pass through the door, and then climbed over the debris piled on the earthen floor. His eyes slowly adjusted to the gloom that filled the inside of the hut. The rank struck Heimdall, causing him to gag. As his eyes finally adjusted, he made out an old table, a bench, old rags heaped high in one corner, and a broken down cubit leaning against the wall. In the middle of the room he saw two old people crouched on the floor, facing each other near a small fire. Their names were Ai and Edda, Great Grandfather and Great Grandmother.

“Do you welcome me?” Heimdall asked.

“What is your name?” asked Ai.

“Rig,” said Heimdall.

“You are welcomed in our home,” said Edda.

Heimdall moved in with Ai and Edda. His voice was like music and his words were as sweet as honey. In time he won the love of Ai and Edda and was given the best seat by the fire. Heimdall wondered what was in the pot hanging over the small fire. Edda, realizing that their guest was hungry, rose to her feet and fetched a loaf of old bread from the cubit and placed it on the table. She then took the pot and placed it on the table next to the bread. Three bowls she placed before the pot and filled them with the thin broth from the pot. The three of them sat on the bench eating their meager dinner, but Heimdall was not pleased with the meal.

After they finished their meal, Heimdall grew tired and told his hosts that he was ready for sleep. Once again his words were so sweet that he was able to convince his hosts to give him the best position on the only bed in the stinking hut. The three of them slept with Heimdall lying between Ai and Edda. For three nights and days, Heimdall remained in the house of Ai and Edda and then he left, after thanking his hosts for their hospitality. He departed as he arrived.

The days passed as the two stallions, Arvak Early Waker and Alsvið All Swift raced across the sky pulling their chariots, the sun and the moon, behind them. Day raced across the face of the earth many times. His golden mane stallion Skinfaxi shone so great that it lit up the sky, until Night soon arrived riding her stallion Hrimfaxi and shrouding the earth in cool darkness once more. Many days and nights passed as the year turned and the seasons changed. Summer passed

and eventually Winter arrived, and after nine months had passed Edda gave birth to a baby boy. Ai sprinkled his new son with water, and then Edda wrapped him in a swaddling cloth. He had black hair, Ai and Edda named him Thrall.

Thrall was not what one would call a beautiful baby, but he was an unusual one. His skin was wrinkled and dark, and his hands were rough. His fingers were stubby and his feet were big. His face was ugly and his back bent. His butt was too wide and his legs too long. But Thrall was uncommonly strong and could labor hard under the burning sun for many hours.

When Thrall was still a young man he met a girl, who was just as homely as he. He took her home and married her. She was bowlegged and her skin was discolored and damp. Her face and arms were sunburnt and peeled, and her hair was hard and coarse and tangled in a terrible mess. She had the nose of a boxer and crooked teeth. Her name was Thir the Drudge.

Thrall and Thir were made for each other and soon they were setting up a house of their own. They lived in a hut just as rundown and dilapidated as the hut of Thrall's parents. In no time, Thrall and Thir had produced a family with many children. The names of their sons were Fjosnir the cattle man, Klur the Coarse, Hreim the Shouter, Kreggi the Horse Fly, Kefsir the Concubine Keeper, Fulnir the Stinking, Drumb the Clot, Digradli the Gross, Drott the Sluggard, Leggjaldi Long Legs, Lut the Hunchback and ashen-faced Hosvir. As ugly and vulgar as these ten sons were they were put to work by their father. Under his hard hand, they worked diligently and soon repaired the hut and spread dung over the fields. Each took his turn at herding sheep and swine. Thrall worked them mercilessly, forcing them to dig up peat and cut wood. Whenever he turned his back on them, they would try and sneak away, and then Thrall had to take the whip to them to keep them working.

Thrall and Thir not only had sons, they also had daughters. Their names were oafish Drumba, dumpy Kumba, hefty-butt Okkvinkalfa, homely Arinnefja, noisy Ysja, subservient Ambott, leathery Eikintjasna, rundown Totrughypja, and tall and bony Tronubeina.

These were the children of Thrall and Thir, and from them were descended all the races of thralls who could not create cultures or civilized societies, but only labor long and hard like serfs and slaves for their betters.

After Heimdall left Ai and Edda, he traveled for many years across the face of the earth. He did not stop until he came to the edge of the world, where the sun rose every morning. Here he found a farm, and walked up to the front door. The sun was sinking in the west and dusk's shadows were stretching across the world.

Heimdall knocked on the door and entered. He found a fire burning in the middle of the room. The heat from the flames filled the room with warmth. The God noticed two people, a man and a woman, sitting around the fire. They were Afi and Amma, Grandfather and Grandmother.

Afi was sitting with a beam of wood across his crossed legs. With a knife, he was cutting the wood. A pile of shavings laid at his feet. Afi's hair was combed and his beard was cut and neatly trimmed. He wore a leather jacket and pants that were clearly well-tailored.

Amma was absorbed in her work, spinning flax on a spinning thread. Her silver hair was nicely pinned and wrapped in a band round her head. She wore a simple dress and shawl that was clasped in front of her by a metal pin.

"Do you welcome me?" Heimdall asked.

"What is your name?" asked Afi.

"Rig," said Heimdall.

"You are welcomed in our home," said Amma.

So Heimdall joined the elderly couple in their home and spoke words that melted their hearts, as only Heimdall knew how. As before, Heimdall was able to win the best position around the fire. There was a pot hanging over the fire, and he wondered what was in it. Amma could see her guest was hungry and stopped her work. She got up and walked across the room to an oak cubit and took out a loaf of bread. She also took out a platter of butter, cups and some knives and spoons. Then she arranged everything neatly on the table, where a large jug of beer was sitting. Next she retrieved some boiled veal from the cooking pot, and set it on the table. Everyone sat around the table and began enjoying the dinner that she had prepared.

After they finished their meal, Heimdall grew tired and told his hosts that he was ready for sleep. Once again, his words were so sweet that he was able to convince his hosts to give him the best position on the only bed in the stinking hut. The three of them slept with Heimdall lying between Afi and Amma. For three nights and days Heimdall remained in the house of Afi and Amma and then he left, after thanking his hosts for their hospitality. He departed as he arrived.

The days passed as the two stallions, Arvak Early Waker and Alsvið All Swift raced across the sky pulling their chariots, the sun and the moon, behind them. Day raced across the face of the earth many times. His golden mane stallion Skinfaxi shone so great that it lit up the sky, until Night soon arrived riding her stallion Hrimfaxi and shrouding the earth in the cool darkness once more. Many days and nights passed as the year turned and the seasons changed. Summer passed and eventually Winter arrived, and after nine months had passed Amma

gave birth to a baby boy. Afi sprinkled his new son with water, and then Amma wrapped him in a swaddling cloth. His skin was pale and his eyes possessed a bright light. His father called him Karl.

Karl grew quickly into a young man. He was well built and strong. He displayed an aptitude for learning and soon could do most of the chores around the farm. He could fasten the share and coulter to the plough and learned how to care for the animals. He acquired the skill to build barns and huts and repair fences and dig foundations, and seed the field and all the crafts needed for a skilled artisan.

When Karl had grown old enough to marry, his parents surprised him by finding a suitable young woman for his wife. She was the daughter of a freeman. On the appointed day for the wedding, her family brought her in a wagon to Karl's own farm. She was dressed in a gown and veil and keys jangled at her waist. Her name was Snoer and she was made welcomed by Afi and Amma. They exchanged rings and accepted the presents offered them at their wedding. Karl and Snoer were immediately set about settling into their new home and lived as husband and wife.

Karl and Snoer soon had a large family with many healthy children. Among their sons was Hal the Man, their first-born, and their second son was named Dreng the warrior. Among their other sons was Hold the landowner and Thegn the Freeman, Smith the Craftsman, Breid the Broad-Shouldered, Bondi the Well-Trimmed, Bui and Broddi, who both excellent farmers, Brattskegg the Dashing and Segg the Manly. Snoer also gave Karl many daughters. The eldest was named Snot the Serving Woman, Brud the bride, Svanni the Selnder, Svarri the Proud, Vif the Good Wife, Feima the Bashful and Ristil the Graceful.

These were the sons and daughters of Karl and Snoer and from them were descended all the races of artisans, farmers and builders.

Heimdall once more found himself walking across wild country. He continued to walk, this time following the sun racing across the sky. He finally came to a hall far to the west. He walked right up to the hall and found wide doors facing south, with a great wooden ring on one of the posts. The doors were intricately cut with patterns and images of animals and birds.

The God knocked and not waiting for an answer, opened the door and entered the hall. He marched down a long hallway and into a spacious hall. Heimdall saw a man and a woman sitting inside the hall. Their names were Fathir (Father) and Mothir (Mother). They sat gazing into one another's eyes like two moonstruck lovers. Their hands touched gently at the fingertips.

Unaware of their visitor, Fathir returned to work on his bow and arrows. Heimdall just stood and watched as Fathir twisted the bowstring and sharpened the arrows. He then fitted the spring on the bow and tested its strength.

While Fathir continued his work on his bow and arrows, Mothir resumed her working, weaving and sewing. She possessed a rare beauty. Her skin was snow-white and her hair shined like the rays of the sun. Her eyes sparkled like mountain spring water and her neck was long and graceful, as were her arms and legs. She wore a white and blue gown with no sleeves, revealing her pale-smooth arms. From her neck hung a blue cape, and on her breasts were two oval brooches.

“Do you welcome me?” Heimdall asked.

“What is your name?” asked Fathir.

“Rig,” said Heimdall.

“You are welcomed in our home,” said Mothir.

So Heimdall joined Fathir and Mothir. He spoke words that melted their hearts, as only Heimdall, knew how. As before, Heimdall was able to win the best position around the fire. There was a pot hanging over the fire, and he wondered what was in it. Mothir could see her guest was hungry and stopped her work. She set the table with an embroidered linen cloth, silverware and fine china plates. Mothir place several golden loaves of bread, freshly baked and still warm, on the table. A silver pitcher was filled with red wine, and three silver goblets were placed on the table. There were silver bowls that contained cheese, butter and vegetables. Finally she placed a large silver platter filled with roast pork, beef and lamb on the table.

After the meal, sleep overtook Fathir and Mothir and their guest. They could barely keep their eyes open and so decided to turn in for the night. The God spoke honey-sweet words, and in no time convinced his hosts to favor him with the best position in the middle of the bed. For three nights the God slept with Fathir and Mothir. He thanked them for their kindness, and then departed as mysteriously as he arrived.

The days passed as Arvak Early Waker and Alsviid All Swift raced across the sky pulling their chariots behind them. The sun and the moon, behind them rose and fell. Day and Night raced with ease across the sky many times. Skinfaxi golden mane lit up the sky, and Night always followed, riding her stallion Hrimfaxi and shrouding the earth in the cool darkness. Many days and nights passed as the year turned and the seasons changed. Summer’s strength weakened and Winter’s icy finger laid claimed to the world.

Nine moths passed and Mothir gave birth to a wondrous baby boy. They sprinkled their son with water and wrapped him in silk. His hair was fair and his

cheeks pink, but his eyes glowed with grim determination, revealing a powerful will within his infant mind. He was named Jarl by his mother and father. As he grew into a young man, he displayed the talent of a sharp mind and quickly learned many skills. Jarl especially loved everything that involved battle. He mastered the bow, swordplay and the lance. No one could match his skill as a rider, nor could anyone equal him as a swimmer.

Many years had passed when the Heimdall finally reappeared. He walked out of the woods, not far from the hall where Jarl lived. Heimdall could see Jarl sitting by the hall and made his way toward him.

“Jarl,” he said. “I am Rig. Am I welcome?”

“You are welcome,” Jarl said.

“I have something for you,” the God said. “I bring you a gift.” Heimdall pulled a bundle of staves carved from wood, from under his cloak. There were signs colored red inscribed on them.

Jarl stared at the strange pieces of wood. He examined them with amazement, for he had never seen such things before.

“What are they?” Jarl asked.

“They are runes,” Heimdall said. “They contain the secret of the magic that the All-Father learned when he hung himself on Yggdrasill, as an offering from himself to himself.”

Jarl looked at the runes and then at Heimdall once more.

“Do you know the words that can cure the mind of pain, or a suffering heart?”

Jarl slowly shook his head.

“Do you know the words that can make fire, or put it out? Do you know the words that can still the sea and cause rain to fall or stop?” Heimdall continued to explain the secret meaning of the runes to Jarl. Jarl listened carefully and understood instantly what the God told him. Somehow he felt that he knew this stranger, as if he had been waiting for him to come and teach him the secret magic of Odin all his life.

“There is one more thing that I must tell you,” Heimdall said.

“What might that be?” Jarl asked.

Heimdall took Jarl by his arms and held him before him. His knowing eyes could see right into him, revealing his soul to him. “You are my son,” Heimdal said. He began explaining how he had visited the hall of Fathir and Mothir long ago. “You are my son, and I am Rig the King, and you will one day be known as Rig the King. You will win many lands and build many great halls. You will have many children, and from your children will spring many great nations. And these

nations will wander throughout Midgard, settling lands and building great empires.”

Heimdall continued to look deep into Jarl's eyes and then without saying another word, he turned and walked out of the hall and disappeared into the darkness of night.

Jarl felt relieved and proud. He thought about everything that his father told him and he felt as if he could see for the first time. He understood his destiny, and how many men are given such a wonderful gift?

Jarl decided to leave the hall where he had lived all his life. He began traveling east, over mountains, through great forests and across wide rivers until he came to a land where the fields were green and vast, and the earth black and rich. He gathered a group of loyal followers around him and here he built a great hall.

Jarl forged a great army from his followers and fought many battles against all who stood in his way. He led his followers against his enemies, winning many battles and baptizing the lands that he claimed with his enemies' blood. He eventually built twenty-four great halls, and won enormous wealth and riches, which he generously shared with his followers.

Jarl sent a messenger to the hall of the great king, Hersir, to ask for his daughter's hand in marriage. Her name was Erna, and she was fair-haired and long-limbed. Besides possessing great beauty, she was also sharp of mind and accomplished whatever she set out to do. Hersir was delighted and he gladly gave his daughter to Jarl as his bride. Erna was escorted to Jarl's great hall by a huge host. Jarl and Erna married and lived happily as husband and wife.

As the years passed, Erna gave her husband many children. They called their sons Bur the Son, and Barn the Child, Jod the Child and Athal the Offspring, Arvi the Heir, Mog, Nid and Nidjung the Descendants. There was also Svein the Boy, Kund the Kinsman and finally Kon the Youngest. All of them grew up strong and courageous. All of them took wives and set out from their parents' halls to seek out new lands of their own. They fought many battles and won lands for themselves, and on them they built great halls of their own, and from their children great nations rose up.

The youngest, Kon, proved especially learned in the secret magic of the runes. He won the right to be called, Rig the King, after his father died. Kon proved to be the wisest of all Heimdall's seed and he passed his wisdom onto his children. From his children the knowledge of the runes were passed on to the many nations of Jarl.



# 14

## *FORSETI: THE GOD OF CIVILIZATION*

### **I: FORSETI, THE GOD OF TRUTH AND JUSTICE:**

Forseti is the wisest and most gentle of the Gods. His eloquence in speech is unequal. His father is the beautiful Balder, God of the light and peace, and his mother, Nanna, is the Goddess of immaculate purity. After his mother and father presented him to Odin, the All-Father was so moved by Forseti that he awarded him a High Seat Valaskjalf. He was made the guardian of righteousness and patron of justice by Odin. Forseti was also given a palace of his own that is called Glitnir (The Shining One), whose walls, pillars and posts are made of gold, and its roof fashioned from silver. Its radiance is so great that it is the shining tower on the hill that many politicians often refer to in their speeches.

Forseti's name means "Chairman," and refers to someone who resides over proceedings at the Thing. When dealing with dispute, it is good to call on Forseti for guidance and wisdom. He is said to sit upon his throne settling disputes between the Gods and men after listening patiently to all sides and then pronouncing his decisions. His powers of persuasion and eloquent decisions are such that no one has ever come away feeling he has been cheated. A treaty written by Forseti is sure to maintain peace among enemies, for no one would dare challenge a vow once made by him. To break one's oath to Forseti is to ensure the wrath of the Gods and bring on certain death as a punishment. Because Forseti is the God of justice and eternal law, he resides over every judicial assembly. Judges and lawyers should call on him to give them the wisdom to make righteous decisions and argue their cases not only wisely, but truthfully. Anyone who is about to undergo a trial should also call under him, for he is true and never fails to help the deserving.

## II: HELIGOLAND, FORSETT'S HOLY ISLAND:

In ancient times, the Frisians looked to twelve of the wisest men of their communities for settling disputes among themselves. These men were considered the Asegir, or Elders. They would collect the laws of the various families and tribes that made up the nation and compiled a code which formed the bases of the laws for the Frisians. The Elders decided to look for an island in the North Sea where they would not be disturbed and finish their work. When they finished collecting the laws and customs from the Frisians, they embarked upon a small boat and sailed to this holy island that they called Heligoland. No sooner had they set out to sea then they ran into a terrible storm. Fearing that they would drown, the called on Forseti for help. From out of the storm they saw another vessel heading direct toward them. There was only one man in the ship and when he reached their vessel, he led them to a small island out in the North Sea.

The man in the other ship stepped onto the shore of the island and ordered them to disembark and follow him. Awestruck, the twelve men followed their mysterious savior. They soon reached a place where the stranger stopped. He then pulled out his battle-axe and flung it before him. On the spot where it hit the ground, a spring of crystal clear water sprang up. Without a word passing among them, the twelve men imitated the stranger, who took a drink from the spring. They then sat in a circle with the stranger, who it seemed to resemble all twelve of them at once. No one spoke, but the silence was soon disturbed by the stranger. He spoke in a low tone, which gradually became louder and more forceful as he proceeded to reveal a code of law. This code seemed to include all the good points of the various laws and codes that the twelve men had collected from the families and tribes of the Frisian nation. When he finally finished, the stranger disappeared just as mysteriously as when he appeared. The twelve elders finally spoke and all proclaimed that it was Forseti himself who had saved them and led them to this island. They immediately agreed that the code he had just revealed to them was wonderful and even if they tried for the rest of all their lives, they could not come up with a more honorable set of laws. They voted unanimously to accept the laws of Forseti as the laws of the Frisians, and declared this island to be the Holy Island of Forseti. They declared a curse on anyone who might desecrate its sanctity by quarreling or committing violence here. In time, the island became known as a sacred place. Even the boldest of Vikings refrained from raiding the island in later times.

The island became a site for solemn assemblies and ceremonies. Jurists would drink water before commencing with their business in memory of Forseti's visit.

The waters of this island were considered so holy, they people traveled from far and wide to come to Heligoland and drink from its springs. Anyone who drank the water was considered holy, even the animals were considered sacred after drinking the waters of the holy island.

It became a custom in northern Europe to conduct the business of government and dispensing justice only in the Spring, Summer and Autumn, and never in the Winter months. This custom comes from the belief that Forseti never holds his assizes in Winter. Forseti is, like his father, a God of the light. He brings the light of justice and truth to our people. He is the personification of what we might refer to as a civilized society. One definition of civilization, as we use the word today, means an ordered society based upon the rule of laws and codes. It is the opposite of chaos and disorder. It is a society where men govern themselves justly and honorable, according to laws established by the consent of the governed. This is the meaning of Forseti, and when he is absent, there is only the darkness of barbarism that is personified in the short, dark days of Winter.

# 15

## *ULLER: THE GOD OF WINTER*

### **I: THE GOD OF HUNTING AND SHOOTING:**

Uller is the son of Sif, and his stepfather is Thor. While any records of who his father is, are lost, it is thought that his father was a frost giant. Uller loves the cold and everything associated with Winter. He is a good archer and an expert skier. He loves the cold and loves even more to travel over the icy landscapes. He is depicted as wearing snowshoes and skies that glitter like ice. Uller delights in the chase through the forest and snowbound landscapes. The freezing winds of the north did not slow him down. He wears heavy clothing made from furs and leather that protects him from the worst weather of the northern regions.

His appearance is handsome, but he is a fierce warrior who loves favorably on those who call on his support during duel fighting. Hunters also call on him for assistance when they are out hunting. Uller is the God of archery, as well as hunting, and carries a quiver full of arrows and a huge bow made of the best yew. He set up his home in a hall, Ydalir (Yew-Valley), located near a yew forest. All professions who use weapons should seek his good favors in their occupation, for he is the God associated with shooting.

### **II: THE WINTER GOD:**

Uller has several names that include Vulder, Holler, Oller and Ollerus and all are associated with Winter. During the Winter months he is considered the highest of Gods, second only to Odin. During the Winter months he is given full authority over Asgard and Midgard by Odin. By some account, he even supplants Odin as Frigga's husband, and this might mean that Uller is actually the cold, wintry side of Odin's personality. But mankind does not hold a great place for Uller in

their hearts. Because of his cold disposition, he is not known for bestowing his favors on mankind too readily. During the Summer months, Uller retreats to either the frozen North or the Alps. In each of these dwellings, Uller had constructed a Summer home to live until Winter's return, and Odin departs once more.

In old Anglo-Saxon England he was known as Vulder, and in parts of Germany he was called Holler and considered the husband of the fair Goddess Holda. Holda was a fertility Goddess of Spring. Uller was said to cover her fields with a thick mantle of snow during the Winter months, so as to make them more fruitful when Spring finally arrived. In Scandinavia, it was believed that Uller was married to Skadi, Njord's divorced wife, the female personification of Winter and cold. He proved a better husband because of their shared love for ice, snow and the cold.

### **III: A GOD OF THE DEAD:**

Sometimes Uller is associated with death. He rides with Odin on the Wild Hunt, looking for the souls of the newly deceased. Sometimes Odin even permits him to lead the hunt. Uller is known for his ability to travel with great speed. Many people still say that they can feel a cold wind of death pass them when they had a premonition of pending death or doom. It is Uller who is passing them on the Wild Hunt when they shiver with fear or dread.

### **IV: ULLER'S SHIP:**

Uller has a great ship, which is sometimes referred to as his shield. He can travel across the iciest oceans or the snowiest landscapes in it. He uses a form of runemagic to form the shield from bone. His snowshoes are turned up like the front of a ship and are also shaped like shields. They act like shields protecting his feet from the snow. For this reason Uller is also a shield-God.

### **V: THE WORSHIP OF ULLER:**

Uller's temples were once many and scattered everywhere throughout northern Europe. The most common object that could be found on his altar was a ring in which oaths were sworn. Unlike Odin's or Thor's ring, which were arm rings, Uller's ring fit on the finger. When swearing a oath, one placed it on his finger. If

he was a premeditated perjurer, the ring is reputed to shrink violently and crushing the finger.

People visit Uller's shrines during the Winter months of November and December. They would ask Uller to cover their fields and lands with a thick coating of snow to ensure the land to be rich and fertile when the snow melts in the Spring.

It was believed Uller sent out the curtains of light that filled the Winter sky at night known as the aurora borealis. In this, he can be associated with Balder, the personification of light. Like Balder, he spends the Winter in the Netherworld, which is associated with the cold and darkness of Winter. Because of this, Uller is considered a friend of Balder and has the ability to visit Balder in the dark coldness of the Netherworld. On Midsummer day he resigns his sway over the world to Odin, the God of Summer. On this day, Balder comes and sends Uller away with good wishes and tidings.

When Christianity finally supplanted the old faith in Europe, Uller was transformed into Saint Hubert, the patronage Saint of Hunting, who was also patron of the first month of the old year calender, which began on November 22. The significance of this month to Uller is that it is when the sun passes through the constellation of Sagittarius, the bowman.

# 16

## *AEGIR: THE ANCIENT GOD OF THE SEA*

### **I: THE SEA GOD:**

The sea was very important in the life of the ancient Norse. They had several deities who represented the ocean. Njord, of the Vanir, represented the sea close to shore, while Mimir, of the Aesir was sent to the Vanir in exchange for Njord, represented the primaeval ocean from which all things were suppose to have sprung. But the supreme ruler of the ocean or sea was Aegir or Hler, who should be placed among the giants rather than among the Gods. He had nine daughters who are known as the waves, and are the mother of Heimdal. Aegir lives in a hall at the bottom of the sea near the island of Lessoe, in the Cattegat or Hlesey.

“Within the glimmer of the gleaming cave,  
beneath the island Lessoe, and within the crystalline dome,  
lives the King of the Sea, the father of the wave.  
In the ocean vast and splendor, does Aegir makes his home.”  
(Robert Blumetti)

Aegir is one of three giants who live among the Gods. The other two are Loki (fire) and Kari (air). Though he is counted among the Aesir, he is actually a giant and considered omnipotent within his realm. His name is related with the word for water and he is the personification of the ocean. His power lies within the vast watery realm and he can use it for good or evil. The river Eider was known as Aegir's door, and his jaws were considered the watery vortex and tidal waves that devoured ships at sea. He is associated with the Greek God, Poseidon and the Roman God, Neptune. He is usually represented as an old man with a white beard and claw-like fingers. If one saw him on the surface of the sea it usually is a

bad omen. He rises to the surface with the intension to drag some passing ship to his realm at the bottom of the sea. Aegir was feared by men at sea.

Aegir also possesses a great cauldron given to him by Thor and Tyr. It is known by the name of Egor, and in it he brews the mead of life, from the blood of Balder. This mead is synonymous with the sea of life. Life began in the salty waters of the ocean, and the new earth will rise once more out of the sea after Ragnarok, in the dawning of the Age of Gimli.

## II: AEGIR AND RAN:

Aegir was married to his sister, Ran. In old English, the word for sea was *Garsecg*, which means, spear man. Aegir was usually depicted carrying a trident while his wife-sister, Ran, carried a net to ensnare ships. Ran's name means Robber. She is thought to be cruel and greedy. She likes to entice sailors to crash on the rocks in the sea, where she ensnares them with her net. It is thought that the mermaids are her daughters and entices sailors to their death in her bidding. Thus, Ran is considered the Goddess of Death for those who died at sea. Like Hel, she welcomes those who died at sea to a coral realm in the deepest part of the vast ocean. Like Valhalla, the dead are treated well and feast on fish, and drink their fill from Aegir's wonderful mead. Ran also loves gold, which she calls "the flame of the sea." Throughout history, alchemists tried to make gold from sea water, and it is believed that the knowledge to do so is a secret guarded by Ran. One way sailors tried to win Ran's good grace was to carry some gold with them, and throw it into the sea whenever their ship was ensnared within a storm at sea.

## III: THE WAVES:

Aegir has nine daughters that are known as the waves. They are sometimes known by such names as Gjolp (howler) and Greip (grasper). They often entice sailors to their doom. Sometimes they are referred to as mermaids and do the bidding of Ran, enticing sailors to jutting rocks at sea, so that their ships can crash on the rocks and the sailors can be ensnared in Ran's net. The waves are also the mother of Heimdal. They are beautiful, with snow-white skin and golden hair that glimmers like gold. Their eyes are deep-blue like the sea and they are willowy and sensuous to the point of driving men sexually wild with lust. They sometimes appeared dressed in blue or green veils that leave little to the imagination. They could be as moody as the sea. Sometimes they are mischievous and playful, while other times they were sullen and pathetic. But they always seek to drive men mad



with desire. Like the storm at sea they could at times appear wild and salacious to the point of shrieking aloud with lust.

They are also considered to be river nymphs that are called Elf or Elb, who gave their name to the river Elbe in Germany. Aegir was considered “Old Father Rhine” and represented the Rhine River in Germany. The tale of the Rhine Maidens refers to water sprites who are the same as the waves at sea. One of the most famous of the Rhine maidens was Lorelei, who sat on a rock in the Rhine. She would sing a song that lured mariners to their death.

# 17

## *HERMOD: THE MESSENGER OF THE GODS*

### **I: THE MESSENGER:**

Odin had many sons and one of them was Hermod. He was Odin's special attendant, who Odin relied on whenever he sent someone to go on an quest. Hermod is a beautiful and youthful God, radiant and brave and always willing to go on any quest no matter how dangerous. He is gifted with great rapidity and is the fastest of all the Gods.

Of Odin's sons, both fast and fleet,  
Hermod is fastest on hoof or feet.  
Robert Blumetti

Hermod is employed as Odin's messenger, and for this reason he is associated with the Roman God, Mercury. This is a natural assumption because the Romans also associated Odin with Mercury. Hermod is actually Odin's soul disembodied in a shamanist trance-like state. When the shaman enters a trance state, he has the power to release his soul in what is referred to as astral projection. Hermod is Odin's soul in the process of performing astral projection. Odin has only to ask and Hermod immediately is set to flight on a journey in Odin's service. Hermod wears a magnificent helmet and belt given to him by Odin. He is often given Odin's steed, Sleipnir, to ride on his quests. At other times, Odin gives him his spear Gungnir.

Hermod delighted in battle wan war. He is known as the most valiant in combat. His bravery and courage astonished Odin, and can be viewed as the warrior spirit that fights on after death. Sometimes Hermod will accompany the Valkyries on their ride to Midgard to fetch the souls of the fallen heroes. He will accompany the souls of heroes to Valhalla, and is the leader of the heroic dead.

## II: HERMOD'S RIDE TO HEL:

In the tale of Balder's death, Odin sends Hermod to Hel. He gives Hermod his horse, Sleipnir to ride to the Netherworld. Hermod must perform magic, using magic spells and a wand. He also owns a magic wand or staff called Gambantein, which is the emblem of his office. He carried it with him wherever he goes. He is the shaman using his magical powers in the other worlds, combating the forces of the dead. Hermod reaches Hel and speaks with his deceased brother, Balder. Balder gives him the arm ring, Daupnir, as a gift for Odin. Daupnir is Balder's promise that he will fulfill his destiny as the instrument of Odin's resurrection. Hermod's ride to the Netherworld is a tale of journeying to the Other World.

## III: HERMOD AND THE SORCERER:

Odin had been plagued by dark dreams and black fears that he could not explain. He could not even get the Norns to explain his dread, so he summoned Hermod and tasked him with a quest. Hermod don his armor and saddled Sleipnir, Odin's eight-legged horse that only Odin and Hermod could ride. Hermod was sent by Odin to the frozen lands of the north where a giant sorcerer lived. He was reputed to possess great occult powers. His name was Rossthiof (Horse Thief) and was known to be a thief who used his black powers to entice travelers into his domain and rob them of their possessions and then kill them. But he also possessed powers to see into the future, though he was reluctant to use them.

Hermod, the swiftest of the Gods rode northward. Instead of carrying his own magic wand, he took with him Odin's own staff. Its powers were great enough to repel any obstacles that Rossthiof might throw up before Hermod. Along the way Hermod did face terrible beasts, horrible monsters and fearsome giants. Nothing could stop Hermod on Odin's quest to reach Rossthiof. Then, the giant wizard himself assaulted Hermod, but the God, armed with Odin's magic, easily fought off all of Rossthiof's attacks. Rossthiof was finally subdued and bound. Hermod promised that he would not set him free until he did as he was told.

Realizing that there was nothing he could do, Rossthiof agreed to do whatever Hermod asked of him upon setting him free. As soon as Hermod unbound him, the giant began muttering incantations. His words sent the sun hiding behind clouds and the earth began to tremble and shake. Storm winds blew out of the north and howled like a pack of wolves.

The magician instructed Hermod to look to the horizon. Hermod did as he was told and saw a terrible stream of blood turning the ground red in the dis-

tance. Then a beautiful woman appeared and with her was a little boy. To the amazement of Hermod, the boy quickly grew into a young man. Hermod now noticed that the young man was holding a bow and arrows.

Rossthiof began explaining the meaning of the omens which his magic had conjured up. The stream of blood portended the death of one of Odin's sons. He then told Hermod that Odin should seek out and win Rinda, who lived in the land of the Ruthenes (Russia). He should take her as his wife for she is destined to bear him a son who would attain his full growth overnight. He was to be the instrument of vengeance against his brother's death.

Hermod listened to everything the Rossthiof told him. He returned to Asgard and reported everything that he saw and what Rossthiof said.

This story clearly depicts Hermod as Odin's shaman spirit sent on the quest to the Other World, to seek out the giant sorcerer. He used the magic staff and does battle with the evil spirit of Rossthiof, forcing him to use his powers to reveal what Odin could not see.

# 18

## *VIDAR: THE AVENGER OF ODIN*

### **I: THE SILENT GOD:**

While traveling through Midgard, Odin came upon the most beautiful giantess. Her name is Grid and she lived in a cave in the wilds of a desert. Odin wooed her until she surrendered herself to his advances. From their union was born a son. His name is Vidar, and he grew into the strongest of the Gods, second only to Thor. He is considered the personification of the primaeval forest, and the imperishable forces of nature. Being of the union of Odin, (Mind) and Grid (Matter), Vidar is the will power that causes one to act. Silence is golden, and Vidar does not waste his time talking about what can be done. He is a doer and the force of action.

Just as Heimdall is the God that links the Gods to the forces of the oceans, so is Vidar the God that links the Gods to the living forces that reside with the great forests. Along with Vali, Modi and Magni, he is of the generation of Gods that survives the destruction of Ragnarok. Being the embodiment of the living forces of the forest, he is the instrument of the regenerated earth that will rise again out of the sea after Ragnarok. Vidar lives in his own palace, known as Landvidi, in the realm of Vidarsland (the wild land). His palace is decorated with vegetation, especially beautiful flowers, green vines and lush boughs. This habitat is located in the middle of a vast and impenetrable primaeval forest filled with the solitude and silence of timelessness.

### **II: VIDAR'S SHOE:**

Vidar is the instrument of Odin's vengeance. He is tall, well-built, strong and powerful, and is clad in an extraordinary armor. He also possesses a great broad-

bladed sword, but most of all, he wears a great iron shoe, made from the endless pieces of leather discarded by shoe-smiths throughout the ages. The actual construction of the shoe was performed by his mother, Grid, who is also a friend of Thor. She possesses marvelous powers of craftsmanship, and designed the shoe to protect her son from the fiery element that would lay waste to the nine worlds during the destruction of Ragnarok. Just as she made the gauntlet that she gave Thor to protect him during his encounter with the giant, Geirrod, she made the shoe, to both avenge Odin's death and protect her son and allow him to survive Ragnarok. The shoe had to be big and strong enough to crush the piercing fangs of Fenrir's powerful jaws.

### III: THE PROPHECY OF THE NORNS:

Vidar was welcomed by the Gods and Goddesses of Asgard. They knew that his great strength and courage would serve their cause well. A great celebration was held in his honor and he was given the golden mead of the Gods to drink. Odin also gladly welcomed his son with great love and joy. When the feasting came to an end, Vidar followed his father, Odin, to the great well, Urdar. There they consulted the Norns, who were constantly weaving the webs of fate. Odin put questions to the Norns concerning his future and that of Vidar. The three sisters of time answer in this way. "Early begun. Further spun. One day done." Then in the name of their mother, the primitive Goddess of fate, known as Wyrð, they added, "With joy once more won." The Norns then proceeded to explain to Odin and Vidar the meaning of time, and the endless cycle of life. All things must grow and eventually wane, until they pass away. But from the seeds they leave behind, there is always rebirth. The same is true of the Gods. So it was written that Odin would die, he would rise again, and Vidar would play the role of his father's avenger, and live through the coming destruction. He would rule at Balder's side, bring renewed life to Nature in the regenerated world that would rise out of the sea.

When the Norns finally grew silent, Grid joined her son and his father, and the three rejoiced in knowing that Vidar would live through the coming destruction. But Vidar did not speak. He returned to his vast woods of Vidarland. Within the primaeval he sits upon his throne, pondering all that the Norns revealed to him. He does not speak of what is destined for him, for he is as silent as the grave. This silence is the knowledge that no man knows what the Norns (the Fates) have in store for him, in the life to come.

## **IV: RESURRECTION, REBIRTH AND RENEWAL:**

Because Vidar is the personification of the imperishability of the forces of Nature, his is also the symbol of resurrection and renewal. Just as he is the force that ensures new life in Nature, he represents the force that ensures Balder's return. This is bound up with avenging Odin's death. He is the Life-Force that links Odin's death to Balder's resurrection or return. This is also the force that is all Nature—death and rebirth. This also makes Vidar the genetic link that connects each generation of man with the countless previous generations of the past, and the countless generations to come.

## **V: WORSHIPING VIDAR:**

To celebrate Vidar, one has only to wander through the boundless expanse of a great forest. The great untamed wilderness of nature that inhabits the boundless regions of the great forest is filled with monstrous shadows and eerie stillness. One cannot be overcome by profound awe for the majestic greatness of Nature. To witness the living power of the force that is Vidar, one has only to stand on a great cliff or mountain overlooking the boundless expanse of the wilds of the vast forest. The living grandeur that stretches out before you is the paragon of Vidar's essence. To create a bond with Vidar, one must simply become one with Nature.

## *VALI: THE GOD OF ETERNAL TRUTH*

### **I: THE WINNING OF RINDA:**

The king of the Ruthenes was named Billing. He ruled as a good king and his kingdom was happy and prosperous, but the king became worried when he learned that a terrible host was about to invade his kingdom. In his youth, Billing was a great warrior, but he was old now, and though he was still in good form, he was too old to lead his troops into battle. His only child was a daughter by the name of Rinda, who was of marriageable age, but she refused to marry, and so Billing had no allies to help him defend his kingdom.

As Billing tried to raise an army strong enough to defend his kingdom, a stranger appeared in his hall. No one had seen the stranger enter, but when he was discovered, Billing saw a middle-age man wrapped in a dark blue cloak and wearing a wide-rimmed hat, pulled low over his face to hide the fact that he possessed only one eye. The stranger politely asked the king the reason for his depression, for it was obvious even to the blind that the king was troubled. The king told this stranger of the danger that his kingdom faced. The stranger promised to lead his armies and repel the invaders.

For some reason Billing could not understand, he believed the stranger that he could save his kingdom and accepted his offer. But the stranger asked permission to marry his daughter if he was victorious. The king readily agreed. So Odin, whose identity was still hidden from the king, defeated the invaders and then sought out the princess for her hand in marriage. But the princess refused him when he tried to kiss her.

Odin was angered by Rinda's refusal, but he did not give up. He could not give up because he knew that only Rinda could give him a son strong enough to avenge the death of his son, Balder. It was foretold by the seeress, Rossthiof. So Odin tried again, and this time assumed the form of a smith by the name of Ros-



terus. In this guise he presented Rinda with the most beautiful ornaments made of gold and silver and decorated with jewels. He asked to pay for the hand of Rinda and the king once again agreed to the marriage, but Rinda was still as stubborn. For a third time Odin appeared before Rinda, this time as a dashing warrior. He hoped that the image of a much younger and handsome warrior would win her heart, but Rinda was as cold and steadfast as a glacier. When Odin tried to kiss, she dismissed him as she did when he was disguised as a general and smith. But the third insult so angered Odin that he pulled out his magic rune wand and cast a spell on Rinda. In horror, she fell back as if in death. No one could revive her lifeless body but in time she finally woke. When she did, the king had discovered that she had lost her senses. She appeared mad and all the physicians in Billing's kingdom were helpless. Finally, an old witch appeared in Billing's hall. She called herself Vecha, or Vak, but in reality she was Odin in disguise. The old woman first prescribed a foot-bath for Rinda, but this was not especially helpful and so the witch told the king he would have to turn her over into her care. The king was desperate and agreed. After Vecha reached his hall with Rinda, he returned to his true self and revived the princess. Having gained full control over Rinda, she consented to Odin's wish to wed her.

## **II: THE BIRTH OF VALI:**

In time, Rinda gave birth to a healthy baby boy, just as Rossthiof had prophesied. He was named Vali (Ali, Bous, Beav) and as the son of Odin, he personified the lengthening days of spring. He was so powerful that he grew into a full grown young man in just one day. Without washing or combing his hair, he set out to Asgard with bow and arrow. When he reached the land of the Aesir, he was welcomed by the Gods, especially by Odin. When he saw Hodur, he instantly understood his purpose in life and pulled out an arrow and put it to his bow. His arrow flew through the air, striking down the blind God, Hodur and avenging the death of Balder.

## **III: THE MEANING OF VALI:**

Rinda is the personification of the hard-frozen ice at the rim of the world. She resisted the warming rays of mighty Odin, who is the spring. He first points out that spring time is when warriors preform their crafts, but he is refused. He next tried to convince her to wed him with adornments of summer, but still she remains unfrozen to his advances. Finally, she yields only after a foot shower,

which represents to thaw of the ice. The earth is finally conquered by the sun's irresistible might, it is freed from the ice's embrace which had made her hard and cold. But Odin's conquest of Rinda is representative of the enlightenment of truth that can dispel darkness of ignorance. Like the icy winter of the frozen north, it is difficult to melt the lies that had harden it. Odin tries force and bribes, but in the end, it is the knowledge of the mysteries that is able to seduce Rinda through the use of Rune magic. Once freed from hard, cold ignorance, Rinda gives birth to Vali, the instrument of vengeance. Vali is truth and his truth sets our Folk free by slaying the blind ignorance of Hodur, just as spring drives away the darkness of winter and melts the freezing ice that prevents people from acting.

Vali ranks as one of the twelve Gods who sits with Odin in the great halls of Gladsheim and Valaskjalf. Vali is destined to survive Ragnarok, just as truth will survive the destruction caused by the lies that fill the hearts and minds of the Folk in the times we live. It is Vali's truth that will help to regenerate the Folk after Ragnarok has passed away. He is the light and warmth of spring that will follow the darkness and ice of Fimbulveter.

#### **IV: THE WORSHIP OF VALI:**

Vali is the God of Eternal Light, and thus the God of Eternal Truth. True to the mark, Vali's arrow kills Hodur, the God of Blind Ignorance, the first time it is fired from his bow. Vali is presented as an archer. His month is the end month of January and the beginning of February, and referred to in Norwegian as *Loisberu*, the light-bringing. He is personified by the Christians as St. Valentine, who also is an archer and is the instrument of generative powers, by which men and women fall in love and ensure the survival of the Folk.

# 20

## *THE NORNS: THE GODDESSES OF FATE*

### **I: THE THREE FATES:**

In northern Europe, the Goddesses of Fate were known as Norns. They are three sisters and are the daughters of the giant Norvi (Time), who in turn, are descended from Nott (Night). The Norns made their appearance right after the end of the Golden Age. They took up their place under the great world tree, Yggdrasil, where the Urd Well is located. They were charged to warn the Gods of future evils, teach them to make good use of the present, and learn from the past.

Their names are Urd (Past), Verandi (Present), and Skuld (Future). They are the personification of the past, present and future. It is their duty to weave the fate of all things in all nine worlds and to sprinkle the sacred world tree with water from the Urd Well every day, and place fresh earth around its roots so that it will continue to grow strong and hold together the entire universe. They were also charged with the duty to guard the precious golden apples that grow from the branches of the Yggdrasil, and permit no one except Idun to pick them so that she could feed them to the Gods. They also care for two swans, which swim on the mirror-like surface of the Urd Well. The swans are symbolic of the spirits of all living things. The Norns adorn themselves with feathers from these swans and sometimes use the power of the feathers to appear as swans in Midgard, and bestow to mortals knowledge of the future.

The two sisters, Urd and Verandi, are considered very helpful. Urd appears as an old woman who is constantly looking backwards, while Verandi is a mature woman, fearlessly looking directly ahead, not afraid to face the present. They have much to teach, and we should learn from them. But it is Skuld, who is a young and beautiful woman, and who often undoes the work of her two sisters. She would often tear apart the net that they weave. She looks forward and is usually veiled. She holds an unopened book and seldom lets anyone read from it.

## II: WYRD, THE NORNS' WEB:

The Norns spend most of their time weaving the web that is the destiny of all living things. This web is symbolic of the Wyrd, and is so large that it encases the entire universe and appears to be made of black threads. If one should see the black threads of the net in the sky, it is considered a bad omen. The three Norns sing enchanted runic songs as they weave. They are driven to weave according to the wishes of Orlog. Orlog is timeless and the eternal law of the universe, and is older than the beginning of time, and more powerful than the most powerful. He has no beginning and no end. Orlog is the eternal essence of Odin, the All-Father in all his guises. It is this essence that is the Wyrd.

The Norns are Fates, but Fate should not be mistaken for predestination. The net that the Norns weave holds the future, but a future that is filled with choices. Each of our destinies have been mapped for us, but the map is filled with crossroads. It is at these crossroads that we are expected to make choices. The choices that we face in the future will be determined by our actions in the past. Thus, we are constantly weaving our future through the decisions that we make as we walk through life. The Wyrd is this process of making choices and moving forward until we come to another crossroad that is the creation of the decisions that we made in the past. "The past will come back to haunt us," is an old saying that is rooted in the understanding of the Wyrd. The Wyrd is that which has taken place and affects the present, which in turn will cause the future to unfold. In the old Roman religion, the Goddess of Luck, Fortuna, is the personification of the Wyrd.

## III: GUARDIAN SPIRITS OR FYLGIE:

We are taught in the Christian religion that each individual has his or her individual guardian angel. This idea of a guardian angel comes from the old pagan religions. Each of us has an individual Norn that guides us through life and is referred to as the Fylgie. These Norns are lesser entities. A Norn might be good, bad or neutral, and which kind that guides you through life will help to determine the quality of life you lead. If one should ever see their Norn, it will be an ill omen, and the Norn will usually take the form of some beast. It usually means you are about to die. But to survive the appearance of your Norn means that you have something very special to do before you die. In the Roman religion, Wyrd is personified by the Goddess, Fortuna. Fortuna will determine the nature of the individual Norn that guides you through life. If you have a benevolent Norn, the

Romans believed Fortuna (Fortune) smiles upon you. This is why luck is often referred to as “Lady Luck.”

#### **IV: THE VALA:**

Throughout ancient Europe, it was believed that women had a special power of sight. This was especially true in northern Europe. Today we refer it to “a woman’s intuition.” In northern Europe, a woman with the power of sight was known by the name of Vala. In Rome and Greece a Sybil. The Norns were also sometimes referred to Vala, but it usually referred to a mortal woman who had the power of divination. The Vala was held in high honor, and the Vala’s predictions were never question. The Roman general, Drusus, was warned not to cross the Elbe River by a Vala known as Velea. He took her prediction that if he did he would die, so seriously that he turned away and never crossed the Elbe. She later foretold of his death by falling off his horse, and it eventually happened just as she predicted.

These prophetesses were also known by other names, such as Idises, Dises and Hagedises. They officiated at ceremonies, and over forest shrines and sacred groves. Great kings and warriors would seek their advice before they had to make an important decision. Dises would ride at the head of an attacking army, encouraging the warriors on. When the battle was over, she would cut the shape of what was known as “the blood-eagle” on the chest of the captive enemies. The blood would be collected and she would use it by plunging her arms into the blood, and then engage in ceremonial dance. The Dises also worshiped Freyja, and performed a dancing ceremony which was known as Vanirdi, and these dances were usually performed in her honor. The Vala were greatly feared when they performed these ceremonies, which were usually performed on the Brokcen, or Blocksberg, on Valpurgisnacht (the night of April 30—May 1).

# 21

## *HEL: THE GODDESS OF THE DEAD AND THE NETHERWORLD*

### **I: LOKI'S DAUGHTER:**

The Goddess of the Dead is the daughter of Loki, the God of Evil. Her mother is the giantess, Augurboda, the Portender of Evil. She has two brothers, and together they are triplets. They are Jormungand, the World Servant, and Fenris Wolf. The three of them were born in a dark cave, in Jotunheim, but when Odin discovered them, he flung the serpent to the lower depths of the ocean and chained-up the wolf. He sent Hel to rule over the domain of the dead, in the deepest regions of Niflheim.

Hel (some times referred to as Hela) is half dead (the lower half of her body) and half alive. She is the personification of death, just as her brothers, Fenris, is the personification of sin and Jormungand is the personification of pain.

### **II: HEL'S DOMAIN OF THE DEAD:**

Hel's domain is located in the deepest part of Niflheim. The journey took Hermond, riding Sleipnir, nine days and nights to reach it. He had to ride over some of the roughest terrain, cold and dark and terrible is Hel's domain. Because of this, the Norse used to dress the dead with a strong pair of boots called Hel's shoes.

The terrible river called Gjoll is the boundary of Hel and to cross it one has to pass over a crystal bridge arched with gold, and held in place by a single strand of hair. The bridge is guarded by a grim skeleton named Modgud, who demands a toll of blood from everyone who wants to pass over the bridge. Once one passes

the bridge, one had to pass through the Ironwood, whose trees possess leaves made of iron. The entrance to Hel's domain lies beyond these woods and is guarded by a terrible hound known as Garm. He constantly rips and devours all who try to pass by, and his face is stained with the dry blood of his victims. To pass the hound one has to offer it a Hel-cake, which never fails those who have served the Folk, in life.

Hel's domain is a terrible place inhabited by unbearable cold and impenetrable darkness. Seething glaciers can be heard breaking and reforming as they pour out of the huge cauldron Hvergelmir, and into the rivers Leipter, by which oaths are sworn, and the river Slid, in which swords constantly turn in its dark waters.

Hel lives in a hideous hall named Elvidner (Miser). There, her servants serve only one dish, and that was Hunger. Hel's knife is called Greed, and her man-servant is Idleness and her hand-maid is Sloth. Her threshold is called Ruin and the bed she slept in is known as Sorrow, with curtains that are referred to as Conflagration.

#### **IV: THE AFTERLIFE:**

Hel's domain is divided into nine sub-worlds. Among the many sub-worlds, there are places for those who died of illness and disease, and those who died without shedding blood, and those who were criminals and unpunished, and those who were criminals and were executed, and those who died as children and those who lived a good and virtuous life. These domains are all different and each hold an existence based on the lives of those who inhabited them. The life that the dead leads in Hel's domain mirrors the life they lived in the world of the living. "The life you lead will echo in eternity."

The innocent do not suffer in Hel's domain, and live in a sub-world that can be referred to as negative bliss. The ancient Greeks believed the dead entered a domain called the Elysian Fields, where they drank from the cup of forgetfulness and lived on with no memory of their lives in the world of the living. This is true of the virtuous and innocent in Hel's domain.

The heroic go to live with the Gods when they die. One does not have to die in battle to enter Odin's or Freyja's halls, but one has to live heroically, in the service of their Folk. They are rewarded, but unlike the Christian concept of reward and punishment after death, the innocent who are ignorant of the truth, are not punished. According to the Christian idea, anyone who does not serve Christ is damned to suffer in the fires of Hell, even those who lived all their lives, never hearing of Christ's message. A Hindu born in India, who might never have even

known there was such a thing, a Christian faith, is still doomed to burn in Hell, to no fault of his own. The idea of the afterlife in the Folk Faith is not so judgmental. Most of our kind are not serving the Gods. Millions of our brothers and sisters who lived their lives as Christians or atheists or in some other faith, but tried to live a virtuous life, are not punished. They are destined to inhabit those sub-worlds that are reserved for those who do not serve the Folk, but still tried to live a virtuous life. Just as they are ignorant of the Gods, they will inhabit the sub-worlds in Hel's domain, in an ignorant state. This is what we mean by negative bliss—never having known the Gods.

But those who live criminal and treasonous lives will suffer to live in eternity in the kind of existence they made for themselves and for others, in the world of the living. This is symbolized by descriptions of ice-cold rivers of venom, horrible serpents devouring the dead, beasts with poisonous fangs, drowning in the cauldron, Hvergelmir, and being devoured by the serpent, Nidhug. Once again, there is no judgement in the after life. You have complete control over the life you will live in the afterlife. So make the right decisions in this life, or you will live to regret it in the next.

## **V: THE GIVER OF PESTILENCE AND DEATH:**

At times, Hel will mount her three-legged horse and ride across the face of Midgard. When she does, she spreads death by unleashing pestilence, diseases, famines and illnesses. At times she is enraged and will stop to destroy whole communities with her rake. An example of this is what happened with the Black Death. She was described as riding a broom across the face of the world in the Fourteenth Century.

She likes to appear in the form of new kinds of death. AIDS is a modern manifestation of Hel. She loves this terrible invention because it is self-inflicted, and she has a very special and terrible domain reserved for most people who have died from all forms of self-inflicted harm.

## **VI; HEL'S SOFT SIDE:**

Hel is half alive, and at times she will permit the dead to return to the world of the living and appear as spirits, to visit their relatives. They usually will convey some important message or knowledge, or even offer reassurance to their loved ones. Hel's soft side was reflected in her willingness to permit Balder's return if Frigg could convince everything in the nine worlds to cry for him. This may



appear hard to some, but she was willing to let Balder return. Would the devil ever permit a spirit to depart from his domain, once it has been imprisoned in Hell?

# 22

## *ELVES: THE CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT*

### **I: THE REALM OF THE ELVES:**

Frey, the God of Light rules over a land known as Alfheim, which can be translated as the Realm of the Elves. The Elves are a fairy folk, and sometimes they are described as a small race of beings with wings and possessing magical powers. But they are actually normal size and a noble race of beings filled with the Life-Force. They shine with the light from the Life-Force, and because of this they are sometimes referred to as Light-Elves or Alfen Folk, or even as the Lios-Alf, which means Light Elves. Alfheim is an airy realm, situated far above Midgard and below Asgard on the cosmic map. The Realm of the Elves is also known as Ljossal-fheim, and considered a broad expanse of light. It is a realm of the mind—the intellect.

Elves who live in Alfheim are a lovely race of beings, possessing beneficial powers. They are pure and innocent and their name, Alf, is derived from the word for white, albus. The Elves are also an aluminous folk and are described as gleaming or possessing a halo of light. They love the brightness of the sun and attend many of the festivals that the Gods hold, especially those dealing with the spring and fertility. They can communicate with people through dreams. Elves can appear as shining-fair humans dressed in noble clothing and are beautiful in appearance. They are fair to look upon and are a happy people who love nature. They possess powers over nature and can cause the changing of the seasons.

### **II: THE FAIRY FOLK:**

There are many tales of the Elves being a tiny, fairy folk, who flirt about the countryside, tending to flowers and birds and butterflies. There are tales of fairy

folk dancing by the light of the moon on toadstools, or holding hands and dancing in a circle in the a clearing in the woods. The truth is that the Elves are a merry folk who do dance and sing and often can be seen in the forest or within mounds, singing, drinking golden ale and making merry. They are the farmers of the wilderness, caring for and nurturing the natural landscape. All who love, nature and care about the environment should seek the help of the Elf folk. They are the true environmentalist. But the image of them as a tiny folk is the result of an illusion.

Many people who have been fortunate enough to have seen the Elves usually see them as small balls of light. The Elves are a spiritual race, and often, especially at night, one cannot see their entire form because of their inner illumination—the Light-Force—shining through them. They might appear as a small ball of light that shines very intensively. In mediaeval times they were referred to as Will-o-wisps—tiny sprites or light Elves who misled travelers at night. They can easily be mistaken for what is known as ball lightning or swamp gas. Many people who lack an understanding of the natural world like to claim they saw a UFO or flying saucer, when they see these lights at night.

Elves love to celebrate the beauty of nature. On a fine, clear and cool summer or spring day, they will gather in a clearing in the forest, or a dell, or even upon a hill or mound and engage in what is known as an Elf-dance or fairy-dance. They will dance about in a circle that will appear like lights floating in the air. These dances are usually accompanied by Elf-music, which is irresistible to anyone who hears it. Stories were told of people being carried away or unable to control themselves after hearing Elf-music. Though there are tales of people disappearing, Elves are not normally dangerous, so long as they are respected. If anyone did disappear, it was not by force. Sometimes the Elves chose a human to remain with them and live in Alfheim.

In Germany, it was the custom for people to make sacrifices to the Elven folk that consisted of a bowl of milk and honey. It was usually left out at night. This was called the Alf-blot. Christians first discouraged people to ceased these sacrifices, telling them that the Elves were demons, but because they were unable to stop people from completely making offerings to these nature spirits, they were eventually associated with angels. This is closer to the truth. The Elves are like angels in that they are not Gods, but associated with the Gods, and they do help and befriend mortals who respect them.

Many people in Europe worshiped the Elves as household divinities. This was true throughout Europe, from Scandinavia to ancient Rome, where they were called lares. In Scandinavia they were sometimes called gnomes. These divinities

were helpful if respected and could be counted on to protect the household from disease and harm.

# 23

## *THE DWARFS: THE MAGGOTS OF THE EARTH*

### **I: THE LITTLE FOLK:**

The Dwarfs were created out of maggots that were found in the corpse of Ymir, when Odin, Vili and Ve butchered him to make the universe. They are described as black as pitch in color, short and twisted, and appeared to be old with long gray beards, short legs and gnarled. But their appearance is deceiving. Despite their short stature and aged appearance, they are very strong, and can carry great loads and work very hard. Dwarfs are children of the earth, and their appearance and strength represents the endurance of the power of earthly things. They are associated with death and have names that have association with the dead, as with the names Dainn (Death), Nar (Corpse) and Blainn (Hel-hue or Black).

Dwarfs possess great knowledge and skills, especially when it comes to smith-work. Their knowledge of shaping minerals and precious metals like gold and silver is unmatched. They mix their smith knowledge with magic, and the Dwarf-name Gandolfer means (Wand-Elf or Magical-Elf). The word, Dwarf might be derived from ancient Aryan or Indo-European words such as *dhuer* (damage), or the Old Indian-Aryan word, *dhvaras* (demon).

They are sometimes referred to by many different names such as black elves, Swart Alfs, dark elves, gnomes, kobolds, brownies, goblins, pucks and Huld Folk. They like to live underground, building great cities and halls in subterranean domains. Their association with the subterranean existence is consistent as creatures that shun the light. They live in darkness and hate the Gods, whom they often try to cheat. But they also offer their services to the Gods, providing them with great gifts and weapons. This can be explained as the need to master or use the weapons and gifts of this world in our struggle for existence. We must balance the gifts of spirituality with those of the material existence, if we want to survive

as a Folk. But they must be balanced, or we will be pulled down by the Dwarfish urge to descend to the existence of the animal.

## II: THE NATURE OF THE DWARF:

The nature of the Dwarf is that of the earth, especially the subterranean world beneath the earth's surface. They are creatures of darkness and many tales of the Dwarfs speak of their fear of the sun. It is alleged that they turn to stone when exposed to sunlight.

The Dwarfs are associated with dreams and the unconscious. Their realm, Svartalfheim is the realm of dreams and the subconscious on the cosmic map, and is beneath Midgard. They are creatures of the shadows and hide within dark places. Four Dwarfs, Austri (East), Nodri (North), Vestri (West) and Sundri (South) holds up the heavens, which was constructed by the Gods from the skull of Ymir. Thus, they support the mind or mental powers of Ymir, who is CHAOS. They also created the Brisngamen Necklace, which is a symbol of lust and sexuality. Freyja had to pay a dear price for acquisition of this necklace. She was forced to have sex with the Dwarfs who created it, and thus defiled the essence of the Gods in the process. Dwarfs are the lustfulness that causes men to abandon reason and engage in perverse acts that are harmful to the Folk. They are the urges of perverse lust, and they must be driven back to their subterranean world. Many Dwarfs are sometimes described as having a swarthy or dark complexion, instead of pitch black, and this is an indication of the Dwarfish lust to mate with both Goddesses and human females, and are reputed to kidnap human females and drag them down into their subterranean worlds.

There is nothing spiritual about the Dwarfs, and their exposure to sunlight results in their being transformed into their true form—cold, hard stone.

In Sweden, they are sometimes referred to as the Huldfolk or Huld Folk. These are Dwarfish creatures who live in the forest and take on the appearance of beautiful people, though they actually possess animal features like horns, hooves and tails. But they use their magic to hide their true natures and will seek to seduce humans and even sometimes marrying them. They will do this by first providing the human with wonderful gifts. One Swedish tale speaks of an old woman Huldfolk called *skogsra* (Forest Ruler) who seduces hunters by giving them weapons that never fail to hit their mark when fired.

### III: THE TARNKAPPE:

Through their creativity and skill to fashion wonderful things, the Dwarfs have created a marvelous means by which they can hide their true natures from others. They have created a cape of invisibility called the Tarnkappe. Sometimes it is referred to as a helmet and they can wear it in the world of light, on the surface in daylight, without being turned into stone. Other tales speak of red caps that they wear with the same powers. These devices give the Dwarfs the ability to associate with other races without being detected, and thus, permit them to do great harm. The Tarnkappe is symbolic of the lying and deceitful nature of the Dwarf, and his ability to transform himself so that he can move undetected within other societies.

Dwarfs love to conceal themselves, especially their true natures. They like to hide behind rocks and speak spells that cause mischief and result in chaos. Sometimes they are referred to as trolls living under bridges, or behind rocks near a road, forcing travelers to pay a price for the use of the means of transportation that should be available to all. This is symbolic of their nature to impede the soul from progression and advancing to a high state of existence.

### IV: THE RING OF POWER:

The Nibelung tale of Alberich creating a Ring of Power from the Rhine Gold is typical of the nature of the Dwarf. He is willing to abandon love, but not lust and craves after the innocent and pure female spirit of reproductive powers for his own materialist gain. He willingly abandons love (the symbol of a healthy society) for the gold that can give him all-power over the universe. He fashions the Ring of Power from Gold (the symbol of wealth), and through wealth he seeks to enslave all other beings to his will. But in the end, this lust for power and domination is his own undoing.

The tale of the Nibelung describes the nature of the Dwarfs as a race who considers all the material wealth of the earth as their private possession. They jealously protect it, and hate it when humans try to take some for themselves. The tale of the Leprechaun is typical of this nature. The Leprechaun is a Dwarf who owns a pot of gold, which usually has magical powers. He guards it, but if a human captures a Leprechaun, he is forced to surrender his pot of gold to him.

There are many tales of Dwarfs promising to perform deeds for humans, usually women, in return for the surrender of their children. One such story is that of Rumpelstiltskin. This is a tale of a Dwarf by the name of Rumpelstiltskin who

promises to spin gold, out of straw. As usual, the dwarf does not tell the human his true name—he hides his true name because it is believed that one's nature is manifested in one's name. He tells her that in payment for his services, she must surrender her first born. She foolishly agrees and the Dwarf does as he promises. The gold results in the girl marrying a prince, but when her first born arrives, the Dwarf appears to claim his prize. This tale typically describes the lust of the Dwarf. He seeks to steal the essence of the Children of the Gods, and thus possess the essence of the Gods by cheating or tricking humans. He wants to possess, corrupt, defile and eventually destroy the Children of the Gods by possessing their children—which is the future.

## **V: THE GIFTS OF THE DWARFS:**

The Dwarfs have produced magnificent gifts through their smith-skill in forging metals and fashioning stone and mineral into marvelous objects of power. They created such weapons and gifts for the Gods as Odin's spear Gungnir, the ring Draupnir, Frey's golden-bristled boar Gullinbursti as well as his ship Skidbladnir, Thor's mighty hammer Mjollnir, Freyja's necklace Brisingamen, Sif's golden hair, and Angantyr's magical sword.

The gifts of the Dwarf should be used with care, like Thor's hammer, they can be used for good or evil. (Thor's hammer can be equated with nuclear power, which could be used for great good or harm). One must have great wisdom to understand how such devices should be used.



# 24

## *THE GIANTS: THE FORCES OF DESTRUCTION AND CHAOS*

### **I: THE OPPOSING FORCES:**

The universe is divided between the forces of chaos and those that give order to the universe. These two, opposite forces are represented as the giants (chaos) and the Gods (order). In the very beginning, there was Ymir, the first of the giants. He was formed out of the opposite forces of Ginnungagap, the icy flows out of Niflheim and the fiery rivers that flowed out of Muspellheim. Ymir was the universe before it was ordered, and thus could be considered the personification of chaos. When it was just Ymir who ruled the universe, the universe was a chaotic place, where the forces of nature were destructive. But soon were born the Gods and they (Odin, Vili and Ve) slew Ymir, but they did not destroy him. It is important to understand that they reconfigured Ymir. They rebuilt him, giving him new form. The form they created from the body-parts of Ymir was ordered and disciplined. What the Holy Trinity did to Ymir is create the foundation of the relationship between the Gods and the giants.

The giants are the untamed forces of nature: the hurricane, avalanches, forest fires, floods, fog, earthquakes, storms, glaciers, tidal waves, and volcanos. These forces are uncontrollable and can be considered unconscious. Their power is not completely destructive, for the forest fires and floods do replenish the land, but in the process, they cause great destruction. It is inappropriate to make sacrifices to the giants, for they will not hear our offerings. To help control the destructiveness of the giant-forces, we sacrifice to the Gods, asking them to intervene on our part in the struggle to contain the destructiveness of the giant-forces. Sacrifice to those giant forces that have joined the Aesir, such as Aegir and Skadi are appropriate.

The Gods seek to control the giants, turning their destructive forces into constructive outlets. Those that they can tame are used, (often matting with the Gods and even joining their ranks as equal) but those who cannot be tamed, are destroyed. It is not the mission of the Gods to exterminate the giants, but to channel their power for constructive means. Thus the rivalry between the Gods and giants is one of opposing forces of good and evil, order and chaos, creation and destruction, discipline and wilderness. The Gods must constantly fight to keep the destructive forces of the giants under control.

There are many names for the giants. Sometimes they are called Etins, Thurses, Rises, Jotuns and Muspilli. They are also referred to as storm giants, frost giants, rim giants and the sons of Suttur and the sons of Muspellheim. Giants can come in many forms. There are both male and female giants, and many of the giantesses can appeared as witches, like the great Hag of Ironwood, who appears to be the great mother of the giant-kind. But some giantesses can be very beautiful like Skadi and Gerd. The Gods are always trying to win the giants over to their side. Many of them join the Aesir. Mimir, Aegir, Gerd, Skadi, Jord and many of the giants, and especially giantesses have joined the ranks of the Aesir. This is part of the on-going effort by the Gods to control the chaotic forces of destruction, and channel the powers of the giants for constructive purposes. In many cases the Gods are successful, but in other cases they fail and must destroy the giants, or contain them in the case of Fenris, Jormungand and eventually Loki.

The giants are the containers of a great deal of knowledge, but it is knowledge of the past. Mimir, who comes to live with the Aesir, is considered one of the wisest of all, and after he is killed, Odin reserves his head to assist him and give him advice. And it is into the Mimir Well that Odin surrenders one of his eyes so that he might drink from its waters and thus gain the knowledge of the past. Odin even engages in contest of knowledge with giants, testing his knowledge against them. Once again this is a contests between the past and the future. Thought the giants are the recipients of vast knowledge, it is Odin who has the wise to use such knowledge. What good is owning the largest library in the world if one never read any of the books?

## **IV: SUTUR AND THE SONS OF MUSPELLHEIM:**

Most giants are referred to as stone giants or frost giants and descended from Ymir, the great Father of the Giants. But even Ymir was born from the mixing of

the ice from Niflheim and the fire from Muspellheim. Muspellheim is the realm of eternal fire. The ruler of Muspellheim is the giant, Sutur. Sutur is described as existing at the beginning and we are told that he will survive Ragnarok, when he sends the flames of Muspellheim out to lay waste to all the nine worlds. Sutur is the father of many fire demons, who are referred to as the Sons of Sutur or the Sons of Muspellheim. One of these sons is Loki, the God of Fire and Destruction.

Whether Loki is directly related to Sutur as his son, or descended to Sutur through Ymir, he is in the service of the ruler of Muspellheim. Loki is the God of destructive fire. He is very different from the dull-witted and monestrous giants who are directly descended from Ymir. Loki is the agent of Sutur, sent to invade Asgard and lead the Gods down the path of self-destruction from within. He is the great corruptor, and leads the giants against Asgard at Ragnarok, as the first wave of attack, so that his father, Sutur can finally lay waste to everything that remains.

## **II: JOTUNHEIM: THE LAND OF THE GIANTS:**

The realm of the giants is called Jotunheim, and thought to be in the east, within the cosmic map of the universe. The best description of Jotunheim is simply a wilderness. Jotunheim is usually described as cold and dark, with terrible winds and arctic storms. Sometimes there are great stretches of land that is barren and flat, like the tundras of the far north. Terrible rushing rivers also divide the landscape. Huge mountains are described. Giants live in gray halls that dot the countryside. Sometimes the halls are located in valleys and other times on some huge mountain. But no matter where one travels in Jotunheim, the keyword to describe the landscape is always “wild.”

## **III: THOR, THE ENEMY OF THE GIANTS:**

Of all the Gods, it is Thor who is the great defender of Asgard and Midgard against the destructiveness of the giants. Thor, whose mother is the giantess, Jord or Mother Earth, is the strongest of the Gods. He owns several powerful weapons which include his mighty hammer, his belt of strength and iron gloves, that he uses to wage combat against the giants. He is most often sent to do battle with the giants and giants fear him the most of all the Gods. Thor will often go to Jotunheim to meet with giants, but most of these dealings usual result in the death of the giant.

# 25

## *LOKI: THE DOOM OF THE GODS*

### **I: LOKI UNMASKED:**

Long after the Gods had come to accept Balder's death, they tried to put their grief aside and return to some kind of normality. Odin decided a feast in memory of Balder should be held, and asked Aegir to hold it on his island, Helsey. His gleaming hall under the waves of the sea was made ready for the Gods of Asgard and their guests. Odin gave Aegir the dry blood of Balder, and instructed Aegir to use it to brew a marvelous ale for the Gods in his magnificent cauldron that Thor and Tyr had secured for him from the giant, Hgmir. The cauldron was bottomless and the ale brewed in it was enriched with Balder's life-forces.

Thor was not present. He had not yet returned from a foray into Jotunheim. The precession of the entry of guests was led by Odin and Frigg. Behind them came Thor's lovely wife, Sif with her long yellow hair. And after Sif, walked Bragi and his wife Idun. Tyr came next, the one-handed God. All the Gods thanked Tyr for his part in securing Hymir's mighty cauldron. Njord and his wife Skadi followed Tyr and behind them were the twin Gods, Frey and Freyja. With them came Frey's servants, Byggvir and Beyia. All the other Gods made their entrance along with Odin's youngest son, Vidar. Along with the Gods was a vast host of shining Light elves. They brought vast sums of gold nuggets as gifts to the Gods. Singing and dancing, they entered the great hall to the delight of everyone except Loki, who was last to enter.

There was plenty of food and everyone's glasses were filled with the rich ale brewed by Aegir, and no matter how much they drank, the glasses never emptied. The ale enriched the Gods' essence. Everywhere Aegir's servants, Fimafeng the Swift Handler and Elder the Man of Fire, hurried about like wind that blew across the sea causing waves to roll, attending the needs of those present. They

made good cheer that lightened everyone's hearts, and for the first time since Balder's death the Gods and elves laughed joyfully once more.

Everyone was filled with a renewed love of life, everyone is except for Loki. He remained to himself, bristling at the site he witnessed. The joy that the Gods felt had caused Loki to burn with hate. When one of the guests praised the diligence of Aegir's good hospitality, Loki unable to contain himself any longer, leaped up and lunged at Fimafeng. He pulled out his knife and cut Aegir's servant's throat.

Loki's evil deed caused an uproar throughout the hall. Everyone leaped to their feet, and began shouting for Loki's head. Tables were overthrown and hands reached for Loki, but he was too nimble and escaped through the Hall's door. He kept on running until he disappeared into the darkness of the forest. Aegir and his wife, Ran, urged the Gods to resume their feasting. Ale was passed around for everyone to drink.

Loki did not remain away for long. The merriment and good cheer drew him like the flame attracting the mot. He soon returned from the darkness and reentered the hall. Once inside, he hid and waited. When Aegir's other servant, Eldir walked by, Loki ambushed him. "Be still or I'll give to you some of what I gave to Fimafeng," he said. "Now tell me this. What are the Gods talking about?"

"The great Gods are talking about Balder," Eldir said. "They are also talking about battles, and their weapons, but you'll not find one good word spoken on your behalf."

"Loki's eyes burned red like fire and his mouth twisted into a terrible smile. He released Eldir and decided to reenter the hall. He was determined to tear apart their hearts with hatred and grief. He planned to mix the ale with his poisonous venom.

"Beware, Loki, they will make you eat your foul filth," Eldir said.

"It is you who should beware, Eldir. You are no match with me in a contest of insults," Loki scornfully pushed Eldir aside and walked confidently into the hall. At the first sight of Loki, everyone stopped feasting and speaking. All eyes were fixed on the fire-ent with burning hate.

Loki ignored the contemptuous reception he received as he walked toward the middle of the hall. "I have traveled a long way to reach this feast that I was so unjustly not invited," he announced. "I thirst and no one places a cup of ale in my hand. What has happened to the renown reputation of the hospitality of the Gods?" Loki stood and stared at those sitting. He looked from one to another and could find no one who would speak or offer him a drink. "Why are you so quite? Can no one speak? Is there no one here who will welcome me and give me a

drink? Or, are you all a pack of coward? Make room for me, too either sit and join in your feast or speak up and tell me to leave.”

It was Bragi who finally broke the silence that filled the hall. “You are no longer counted among the ranks of either the Aesir or the Vanir. Your kind is not welcome among our ranks.”

Loki turned his back on Bragi and addressed the High One. “Have you forgotten, Odin, how we long ago mixed our blood in the blood oath? You made me your blood brother, and now you would deny me even a drink after such a long and thirsty journey.”

“Make room for Loki to sit, Vidar,” Odin said. “I order that all make the father of the wolf welcome. I want no trouble to disturb the feast in memory of Balder.”

Vidar rose, poured ale into a cup and handed it to Loki. Loki held the cup and stared into it. He could see the golden ale, but instead of drinking the liquid consecrated in the name of Balder, he spat into it. Everyone watched and saw Loki’s spiteful contempt for the memory of Balder, and were outraged. But Loki ignored their scorn, and smiled wickedly. “I bid greetings to you, mighty Gods of Asgard!” he cried. “I bid you greetings, all except the cowardly Bragi who tried to deny me my right to sit among you.”

Bragi shook his head in despair. “If only you would keep your foul thoughts to yourself and trouble the Gods no more, I will even give you the best of my horses and the sharpest sword and more. I would give you my most precious ring.”

“Why would I want anything that belonged to you, Bragi the coward? Of all the Gods and elves who sit in this hall, you are most cowardly. You have never fought in battle and when war’s horn blared you are the first to run and seek a hiding place.”

“Believe me when I say that if we were not in Aegir’s hall, I would strike you down and sever your head from your miserable shoulders. That would be a fair price for the poisonous lies your tongue does spit.”

Loki laughed. “I pity your deeds do not match your bragging. A true warrior would strike first and brag later, but you sit on your bench like a little girl, trying to cut a man down with her threats.”

Bragi’s wife, the beautiful and forever young Idun, turned to her husband and pleaded with him. “I beg you, dear Bragi, to ignore Loki and turn away from his taunts. Do it for me, our children and all the Gods.” She placed one hand on Bragi’s shoulder and another hand on Loki’s shoulder in a vain attempt to keep them apart.

“Hold your tongue, Idun,” Loki shouted. “You must be the most evil-minded women alive to place your white hand on my shoulder, the murderer of your husband’s brother.”

Idun ignored Loki’s mockery and remained dignified and composed. “I tried to keep the peace in Aegir’s, and the festival in honor of my husband’s murdered brother.”

Then the Goddess, Gefion spoke up. “Let no one exchange barbs with Loki in this hall, for his words are but pure venom that can only poison the heart and infect it with his evil.”

“Do not act holier than thou with me, seducer of boys,” Loki shouted. “How many necklaces did you demand for your debauchery?”

“Has your soul been completely blackened by your evil that you would talk to Gefion this way?” Odin, no longer able to remain silent, called out. “Truly, you have lost your senses and madness has overtaken you? Now speak no more, unless you speak words of good-fellowship, if you can?”

“Do not preach to me about honor, Odin!” Loki shouted. “It is you who should be ashamed for your treachery. How many brave men have you sent to their undeserved deaths? How many times have you waved Gungnir over the head of heroes, braver and more deserving than you so that you might capture their souls and enslave them in your precious Valhalla? Did you not turn yourself into a witch so that you could work your magic without accepting responsibility? Who’s the coward now?”

“You, least of all should speak of such things, Loki. There is no other who is your equal in all the nine worlds when it comes to gender-shifting. Did you not turn yourself into the opposite sex on more than one occasion, and lived for eight winters in the shape of a woman? Did you not give birth to a foul brew of monsters that you bore suckling at your breasts? What kind of man are you?”

“My husband speaks true, Loki,” Frigga now spoke, unable to remain still. “You should not speak of things so ancient that they are forgotten by time. If you must remember of happenings from the beginning of time, then remember, when you and Odin were blood-brothers.”

“You are not one to speak, Frigga!” Loki shouted. “It’s common knowledge that you are a whore. You, the daughter of Fjorgyn, have slept with your husband’s two brothers, Vili and Ve.”

Everyone in the hall laughed at the preposterous charge, all except Frigga.

“You would not dare to speak to me like that if my son, Balder, was present.”

“Your son will never again walk the fields of Asgard, or it great halls, for I am responsible for his death, and fixed it so that he will never leave Hel’s hall.”

“Hold your tongue, Loki!” cried Freyja. Her eyes were burning with rage. “You must be mad to brag of your foul crime, even though it is common knowledge. Of all the Gods in the nine worlds you have the least right to make such a charge, for you have whored yourself. You are not a man, but a she-man who has slept with more men than most women have.”

Loki laughed at Freyja. “Look who comes to Frigga defense, the queen of whores. You, Freyja has slept with more Gods, elves and men than all the Goddesses combined. You have even prostituted yourself with dwarves, so you could get your hands on their precious neckless. How much would you charge me for your favors?”

With that insult, most of the Gods in the hall reached for their swords and would have pounced upon Loki, but Freyja, the Goddess of War, needed no one to come to her defense.

“You truly are the master of lies,” Freyja said. “Your words have sealed your doom.”

“Is that the best with which you can defend yourself, witch?” Loki shouted back. “You have slept with your brother and your father, and the evil deeds that are associated with your name are endless.”

Now Freyja’s father, Njord, came to his daughter’s defense. “You speak of matters you know nothing of, Loki. What could you possibly know of love and the affairs between men and women? All natural acts are foreign to a womanish man like yourself, who has even given birth to babies.”

“Enough, Njord!” Loki shouted. “You were given to the Aesir as a hostage by the Vanir. You are no better than a slave.”

“I am proud to have been the instrument that brought peace between the two great families of Gods, Loki. Unlike you, who seeks to divide and pit people against each other, I have brought nations together. There is no greater honor, and I am proud of this lot that has been placed upon me as I am of my children.”

“To be proud of your whore-witch is one thing, but to take pride in the bastard boy you have spawned by lying with his sister is something else,” Loki said.

It was Tyr who spoke next defending Frey’s reputation. “Frey is the most noble of all the Gods. He doesn’t seduce other men’s wives or virgins, and is acclaimed for setting enslaved men free.”

“Look who speaks!” shouted Loki. “Tyr, the warlord, the poor warlord, who lost his right hand when my son, Fenrir snapped it off.”

“I lost a hand,” Tyr said, “but you, Loki, lost the wolf, Hrodvitnir. And now your son, Fenrir is enchained and fettered until the end of time.”



“Enough, Tyr!” shouted Loki once more. “I sired a son by your wife, and she received the best part of that bargain. And did I get any recompense for my services? No!”

“Fenrir wolf lies bound at the world’s end,” Frey said calmly. “And if you don’t still your tongue, you will meet a similar fate, Loki.”

“Who are you to brag of my son’s fate?” Loki asked. “You, Frey, sold your sword as price for Gymer’s daughter. When the sons of Muspellheim lay low with fire all of Asgard, how will you stand against them with no sword?”

Loki’s insults toward Frey enraged Loki’s servant, Byggvir. “If I were as nobly born as my master, Frey, I would not hesitate to beat some good manners into the lying trickster, and grind his bones into meal and feed them to the pigs.”

“Who was that mouse that squeaked when his betters were talking?” Loki asked.

“I am Barley Byggvir,” Frey’s servant said. “I serve the noblest of Gods and am delighted to be present in this great hall with the sons of Odin.”

“Poor Byggvir!” shouted Loki. “You’ve never been able to matter, and so settled for licking the crap off the boots of your betters. And when the war horns sound, you are hiding under the straw on the floor.”

“You’re drunk, Loki,” Heimdall charged. “Too much drink has loosened your lips and caused your mind to become unstable. Go outside like all drunks and let the cold air sober you up. No one here cares to listen to your foul speech.”

“Ah! So the ever watchful Heimdall, who never sleeps or rests, has abandoned his post to sup the mead of this hall!” Loki shouted. “He must be getting too old and feeble to continue his watch, uninterrupted. Beware, old white one, or my children might slip by when you’re passed out from too much drink and lay low all of Asgard.”

“Don’t be too quick to brag, Loki,” Skadi, the seeress said, as she looked into the future. “Loki, I see your tongue wagging no more. Instead, I see you bound and fettered by chains fashioned from the guts of your ice-cold son, to the sharp boulders by those whom you now insult with your sharp tongue.”

“The giant’s daughter speaks now!” shouted Loki. “But she forgets that I led the way when we butchered your father, the giant Thiazi.”

“If that is the truth,” Skadi said, “then may my halls and temples echo with curses on your head.”

Loki’s mouth twisted in an evil smile and his eyes burned red and green with hate. “Why do you speak so venomously to me now, Skadi? You did not use such poisonous words when you called out the name of Loki when I joined you in your bed.”

The golden-hair wife of Thor, Sif, rose from her seat and stepped up to Loki. She carried a cup filled with the ale made from Balder's blood and handed it to Loki. The smile she flashed was gentle and kind, but it had no effect on Loki. "Here, Loki," she said, in words as sweet as honey and gentle as a morning breeze. "Take this cup offered in friendship and drink with us so we might forget the harsh words exchanged here this day."

Loki looked at the cup as if it was filled with filth. He pushed it aside, spilling it to the ground. Loki then spit on the fallen drink and then turned on Sif. "Look at Sif, who would claim to be chaste and from blemish, but it was I who stole her long, golden locks while she slept, and I would tell you all, I stole more from her that night than her hair." Loki was now beyond all sanity. He leered at her with such malice that Sif stepped back in horror. "Do you long to feel my arms around you once more?"

Loki's insolence toward Sif caused the hall to explode in anger, but it was Frey's second servant, Beyla, who raised her voice. "Quiet all!" she shouted. "Do you not hear the thunder that causes mountains to quake? That can only mean one thing. Mighty Thor approaches. He returns from Bilskirnir and makes his way to Aegir's hall to join us. He will put an end to Loki's slander."

"Sit down, Beyla!" Loki shouted hysterically. "You stink with the caked excrement that dries on your limbs..." But before Loki could finish his vile accusations, thunder rolled and lightning flashed. Into the hall rode Thor in his chariot pulled by his goats. His red beard bristled and flashed with anger.

The God of Thunder slammed his fist on one of the mighty oak tables so hard, everyone fell silent, including Loki. "Hold your vile tongue you scum of giants or my might hammer, Mjollnir, will silence you permanently. I'll rip that malignant growth you call a head from your shoulders if you speak any more lies."

"Ha! So the son of dirt has finally arrived," Loki shouted, now that he regained his ability to speak. "I was beginning to think that the bully of Asgard was hiding from the truths that I speak. But you won't be able to hide from my son, Jormungand, the Midgard serpent when he devours you with his venom."

"If that is the will of the Norns, then so be it," Thor said. "But your wereworm son will suffer the same fate as me," Thor said. "So hold your tongue or el the force of my hammer as I hurl you so far east you will never live to make the journey back to Asgard."

"You speak of journeys now, Thor?" Loki asked. "But I remember how you hid, cowering in fear inside the thumb of a giant's glove. So frighten you were that you wouldn't leave until the sun shone again."

“I’ll say it once more, hold your tongue, giant scum!” Thor shouted. His eyes flashed with lightning as he spoke. “If you doubt my words then I’ll crush you as I crushed the giant Hrungnir!” Thor raised his hammer and began whirling it about, causing winds to rise all about like an approaching storm. “I’ll send you to Nastrond in Hel, where Nidhogg will feast on your flesh and bones!”

Loki, realizing that Thor’s was losing his temper and about to hurl his hammer decided it was time to make a hasty retreat. He slowly began walking up toward one of the hall’s doors. “Hold your threats, Thor, for I see that the truth hurts more than lies, so I no longer linger where truth is not welcomed. But all should know that I leave only because I understand better than anyone how easy Thor can lose his temper.” Loki turned to leave, but just before he made his departure, he stopped in the doorway and turned one more time and defiantly looked around the assembled host. “You might have brewed a potent ale from Balder’s pure blood, but my spells have turned it sour. It will not help you to survive the flames from Muspellheim that will lay low your halls and temples in all the nine worlds. Everything you know will be devoured by the flames of Sotur and only his sons will survive.”

With this last threat, Loki disappeared through the door and into the night. Loki’s transformation from the trickster to a truly evil creature was complete. He was no longer the blood-brother of Odin, but instead, he had reverted to a son of Muspellheim. He was the spoiler of blood and the harbinger of death and destruction. For a long time the Gods and Goddesses and elves sat silently, staring into their ale with Loki’s words still ringing in their ears. The ale that was brewed from the blood of their beloved Balder seemed now soiled. Loki’s evil words acted like venom, poisoning the regenerative powers of the ale. They knew that they could not cheat the predictions of the Norns. They would have to pass away and hope that good men and women who might survive the coming Ragnarok will seek to keep their souls and bodies pure, so that they might be reborn. For a long time they sat in silence until finally, one by one, they rose and departed from Aegir’s hall.

## II: THE BINDING OF LOKI:

After Loki left Aegir’s hall, he made his escape, fleeing to Midgard. After witnessing the anger of the Gods towards him, he knew he could no longer remain in Asgard. Loki’s true nature was revealed before all to see it, and he knew that the Gods would not rest until they had avenged Balder’s death and prevent him from working any more evil. In Midgard he hoped to find a hiding-place.

He searched Midgard for a place so desolated that he hoped that not even the Gods could find it. He found such a place in a steep valley that fell to the sea, but surrounded by lofty mountains on all other sides. Within the valley was a hollow near Franang's Falls. Here, he built a low house with four doors, each looking out in a different direction from the rocks and rubble scattered about.

But even in this deserted valley Loki still felt unsafe. He lived in fear of being discovered and the slightest sound sent him running for cover. When a gull shrieked as it circled high over head, or when he heard the wind whipping about the lofty peaks of the mountains Loki would leap up and seek cover in alarm of being discovered. Even as days turned into weeks, and weeks into months, Loki's anxiety grew until he was plagued by a paranoia that ate at his black soul. He sat in the house where he had a good view of all four directions, but even this did not calm his anxiety.

When he could no longer convince himself that he was safe in his house, he would use his powers as a shape changer to turn himself into a salmon and leap into the seething cauldron at the base of Franang Falls. Here, in the whirling currents he could hide, or even escape down the stream that flowed into the sea. But Loki knew that nothing could escape Odin's all-seeing eye when he sat in his high seat, Hlidskjalf. It was just a matter of time until he was discovered. But he feared the wrath of the Gods most of all and vowed to do whatever it took to escape their vengeance for as long as possible.

Loki spent his days scheming and planning his escape if and when the Gods found him. He would change into a salmon and make his way to the sea before they could catch him. The only way they could stop him is if they had a net so fine that the master of lies could not escape, but there was only one net that fit that description, and it belonged to the dwarf named, Ran. Loki laughed with delight. He knew that Ran would never lend his net to the Gods to be used to capture him. Ran was his friend. He, like Loki, delighted in performing evil. Loki thought to himself that no one else could manufacture such a net—except of course, himself. Loki smiled, and bragged to himself that he could do anything. Did he not kill the divine Balder? Why, if he put his mind to it, he could manufacture a net even finer and better than Ran's. As he sat before the small fire in the center of his house, he picked up some fine linen twine and began knitting it, cunningly, into a finely meshed net. For days he did nothing else but work on his net until it was finished. He raised it and admired it and was sure that not even the tiniest creature could escape through its mesh.

Suddenly, his admiration of his work was interrupted by the sound of voices rolling off the distant sides of the mountains into the valley. Instantly, Loki knew

that they belonged to the Gods. They had found him. With a curse, he flung the net into the fire and leaped through one of the doors of his house towards the falls. He transformed himself into a salmon and dived deep into the whirling currents beneath the cascading waters. There he hid himself in the deepest part of the stream.

When the Gods finally arrived at the low house, they found no sign of Loki. The wisest of the Gods, Kvasir, began to examine what they found inside. The smoldering ashes of the fire that Loki maintained caught his eye. Kvasir began examining the ashes very carefully and noticed the white ash remains of Loki's net. "Look here," he called to the others. "See these ashes. It looks as if Loki was weaving a net and threw it into the fire."

"He must have thrown it in when he heard us coming," Thor said. "The master of lies was weaving a net of lies."

Kvasir looked at Thor. "Yes, a net that we can reproduce and use against him." The other Gods understood and soon were busy following Kvasir's instructions, reconstructing Loki's net. All day and through the night, they worked on the net until they finally finished when the sun rose on the next morning. When they completed their task, they held it up and were pleased at the fine net they fashioned from the ashes. Pleased with their work, they hurried down to the falls to catch themselves a fish.

The waters of Franang's Falls were deafening. The air was wet with mist and spraying water that crashed into the rocks below. The Gods examined the waters. Thor took one end of the net while the rest of the Gods grabbed the other end. They drew it through the waters of the river and through the falls. Salmon leaped and jumped to try and escape the combing net, only to be caught. The Gods examined each fish but Loki was no where to be found. Again and again they combed the net through the waters only to come up empty. The wily Loki found a crevice between several slimy boulders that the water rushed through, but was out of reach of the net. He hid there and watched as each time the net rushed overhead. But the Gods were sure that they felt something alive deep beneath the waters and decided to tie some rocks to the net so that it would scrape along the bottom of the waters and reach into the deepest crevices. Loki realized that he would not escape the net this time and decided that his only means of escape was to try and leap over the net and escape down the river into the sea.

As the Gods tried again, hauling the net across the river. Loki raced up and leaped over the net. The Gods saw him and Thor tried to catch him. His steel-like fingers gripped the fish, but could not close on the slimy scales, and Loki

escaped Thor and slashed back into the waters. Loki began swimming down the river as fast as he could until he reached the sea, but when he reached it, he stopped. He sensed that danger awaited him in the open sea. Aegir had called forth all the sea monsters and serpents from the deepest regions of the seas to wait for Loki if he tried to escape into the sea.

Loki knew there was no where to go but up stream. He turned around and swam, but the Gods were waiting for him. Kvasir had come up with a plan to capture Loki. He had the Gods split into two groups—one on either bank of the river. As they dragged the net down the river, Thor, would follow behind, mid-stream in the river.

The Gods now began to comb the river once more. When Loki saw the net once again, he arched his back, and with every ounce of strength he could muster, he sprang out of the river and over the net. But, instead of escaping the net, he flew right into the hands of Thor, who was following behind the net. This time Thor's hands were free and he was able to grab Loki by the tail. The salmon twisted and struggled, but Thor tightened his grip. As hard as the trickster tried to escape, he couldn't. Loki was finally captured and he knew there was no means of escape. He finally returned to his true form and surrendered to the Gods.

The Gods always refrained from inflicting justice against Loki for Balder's death because of the laws of hospitality in Asgard, but Loki knew that those laws did not exist in Midgard. The Gods were all eager to take their vengeance on Loki. Thor dragged Loki into a cave deep within the bowels of the earth, where light did not penetrate, and nothing but bats and other creatures of the darkness dwelled. The other Gods left in search of Loki two evil sons, Vali and Narvi. They transformed Vali into a wolf and he attacked his brother Narvi, ripping him apart before leaping away and running off toward Jotunheim.

From the torn body of Narvi, the Gods fashioned fetters stronger than the strongest steel from Narvi's sinews and entrails. They immediately returned to the cave where Thor was detaining Loki. Behind them followed Loki's wife, Sigyn, wailing over the fate of her sons and husband.

Once back at the cave, Thor threw Loki to the ground. The Gods set up three slabs of stone and bound Loki to them. Holes were cut into them. One was placed under Loki's shoulders, a second under his thighs and the third was placed under his legs. Then they took Narvi's entrails and bound Loki with the guts of his sons in such a way that no one or nothing could cut him lose. Once Loki was wrapped by the guts of his son they used magic to turn the bonds hard and hold him fast.

To make Loki's punishment complete, Skadi found a poisonous snake and fastened it to a stalactite over Loki's head. The snake's venom would drip straight onto Loki's face, causing him to shudder and quake in excruciating agony. Loki was helpless. All his wiles and evil ways could not help him to escape his fate. Loki said nothing to the Gods and would not beg for mercy. The Gods were pleased with their handiwork and left the cave and Loki to his fate.

It was Loki's wife, Sigyn who stayed with her husband when everyone else left. She remained by Loki's side with a cup and held it over his face, catching the venom as it dripped from the snake's mouth. They did not speak to each other. They could hear only the eerie echoes of the dripping of the venom as it filled the cup. When the cup was filled, she had to carry the cup away and empty it, creating a pool of fermenting poison. And the venom would strike Loki's face once more sending him once again unto uncontrolled spasms of pain and torment, causing the earth to quake. This is Loki's fate until the end of time—until the arrival of Ragnarok.

### **III: THE NATURE OF LOKI:**

Some within the movement to revive the old Folk Faith of our people have sought to rehabilitate Loki. This is a dark occurrence, for it is a reflection of Loki's treasonous nature. Those who wish to reform Loki are themselves being influenced by the tricker's lying nature. It does not surprise me that there are such people who would try to reform Loki. If Loki could fool the Gods, he could easily fool, us mortals. Loki is the master liar. He is the outsider who seeks to invade and can only accomplish this through lies and trickery. He will present himself as a fair and noble creature who only wishes to help and be of assistance. His golden tongue can easily seduce those unfamiliar with his true nature. He is the etin-infiltrator, the Muspellheimer betrayer, the growing evil from within, the parasite that steals our nourishment, the alien-within who seeks to undermine the revival, the abortionist who hopes too stillborn the rebirth of the Gods. He is proud of his role of keeping Balder in Hel and desires to prevent his resurrection. Loki speaks into our ears when we are asleep, who when we are deep in thought and meditate on his true nature. In this way, Loki the trickster will seek out the gullible and blind, like all outsiders seeking to invade the body through stealth and secrecy. We must be on guard to the Loki-reformers, for though they are probably for the most part, honest, they have been mesmerized by the sweet poison of Loki's will. Given the chance, they will unlock the gates and permit the etin-trai-

tor to sneak into Gimli, so that he might perform his evil upon the new age of Balder.

Loki is not a Nordic Satan. Satan is a Christian myth, a fallen angel deliberately by Jehovah to test man. Satan seeks to lead men astray from the righteous path. Loki is nothing like Satan. He is not a fallen angel or God. Loki, by his very nature is an outsider. He is neither Aesir nor Vanir, but a fire-etin. He was conceived in the sparks and flames of Muspellheim. He is an outsider who tricked his way into Asgard. He conceals his true nature for a long time, but eventually, his evil ferments within until his true nature is revealed. His malicious nature grows progressively darker. At first, his antics are mischievous, and often results in good. But in time, his black nature grows stronger and the venom that swells up within his heart overcomes him until all that he does is destructive.

Loki does seek to lead men or Gods astray, he desires their destruction. He is the herald of Ragnarok. He is the instrument of Balder's death, and the cause of Balder's imprisonment in Hel. He is the captain of the forces that seek the destruction of the Gods. His etin nature is unique. Unlike the frost giants, he can hide his true nature, like the flickering fire in the hearth. It can give warmth and cook our food and provide light, but if uncontrolled, it will cause death and destruction on an unimaginable scale. Loki is the ravenous fire that consumes and destroys. He is the firestorm that consumes and chars everything black, killing and burning, and transforming everything into ashes. So where did Loki come from? What is his origin? The old tales do not say. Much has been lost, and the tale of his beginning is probably one of the tales that were lost long ago. But we might find hints in the other tales.

We know that Loki is not a God, but an etin whom Odin made a blood-brother. But what type of etin? He is not a frost giant or a stone giant, but a creature of fire. He is one of the sons of Surtur, out of Muspellheim. Muspellheim existed from the very beginning, but was not uninhabited. It was ruled by Surtur and inhabited by his sons—fire demons. And at the end of time, after Ragnarok, the universe is bathed in flames by Surtur. Could Loki be Surtur? No, but he is one of his sons. Loki is a creature of fire, but he is not a God, but an etin—a giant. But unlike the frost giants who are slow-witted, he is sharp of tongue and quick-witted. His mind is powered by fire and the dancing flames that bite and burn.

Loki is the parasite that eats away from within Asgard. The evil that he produces eventually, over time, outgrows the good that he contributes to the Gods. His nature is the result of his never being able to fully assimilate into the Gods because of his nature. Unable to be fully one of the Gods, his hatred for them



grows until it consumes him. It feeds his desire to destroy that which he could never fully be part of.

Loki's trickery and deceptions cause the Gods to fall victim to blind ignorance. And as he used this blind ignorance to destroy the Gods, so too will Loki destroy us through the same blind ignorance. It is this weapon that he uses to destroy us. He used Hodur to destroy Balder. He used blind ignorance to stamp out the light, or enlightenment. With the triumphant of Hodur over Balder, our people are plunged into blind ignorance. We become easy prey, to be devoured by Loki's wolf.

If Loki is a son of Surtur, his prodigy reads like a list of nightmares. He had three children by the giantess, Angrboda (the one who brings grief). Among the children was the Midgard Serpent, Jormungander (The huge monster), who is destined to battle Thor during Ragnarok. Another child of Loki was Fenrir Wolf, who battles Odin during Ragnarok. And lastly is Hel, the ruler of the underworld by the same name. Loki is brother to Byleister (lightning in the storm), and his other brothers, who are all part of a very ancient genealogy are Helblindi, Loki's blind brother who dwells in Hel, Farbauti, the traditional name of Loki's father (Surtur). The name, Farbauti according to Rudolf Simek, means "the dangerous hitter, which allows a natural-mythological interpretation in the sense of lighting (Kock) or storm (Bugge)." Lighting-storm or perhaps, FIRESTORM? This name fits Surtur perfectly. Na or Laufey Loki's mother means the tree that attracts lightning. It is interesting that the names of his mother and brothers all have something to do with lightning, which causes fire. Loki is also the mother of Odin's horse, Sleipnir. Loki was once married to the giantess Glut (glow), who bore him to daughters, Eisa (embers) and Einmyria (ashes). The crackling of the fire is said to be the sounds of Loki beating his children. Loki also had two sons by the Goddess, Sigyn, who are killed by the Gods as part of Loki's punishment for killing Balder. The death of Sigyn's sons, and her fate as guardian over Loki, while he is bound and awaiting Ragnarok, can be interpreted as her punishment for betraying her heritage, as a true Goddess by cavorting with Loki.

Loki is described as fair in appearance, but possessing an ugly soul. While he does much good for the Gods in the beginning, he does it in spite of his bad intentions. He is often forced, out of fear of punishment by the Gods, to turn his evil to the betterment of the Gods.

There have been attempts to associate Loki with Lodur, who along with Odin and Honir created the first man and woman, but this is not true, and all attempts have failed. Odin, Honir and Lodur are actually Odin Vili and Ve. But Loki can be linked to Prometheus of the ancient Greek religion. Prometheus gave man the

secret of fire, after Zeus specifically forbid it. But this story is actually closer to the Semitic tale of Sammael bestowing upon Adam and Eve the self-awareness and conceit. When they bit into the fruit of knowledge, they dared to think they were as good as God, just as the “Secret of Fire” that Prometheus gave to man and woman also represented the conceit that they were as good as Zeus and the Gods. Loki represents this same conceit, and it is Loki who tries to convince man and woman that they are as good as their Gods. It is interesting that both Prometheus and Loki are fire-etins, or fire-giants, and they suffered a similar punishment for their evil. Both were bound to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains where they were continuously tormented by some form of a beast (in Prometheus’ case, a vulture that plucks out his heart).

Loki is the eternal thief who steals from the Gods (Sif’s hair, Idun’s apples, etc...). He is always trying to take what is not his. Like the fire that destroys others’ possessions, Loki steals our self-worth. Loki is also a party crasher. He often goes where he is not welcomed. He arrives unannounced and causes trouble, disrupts everyone’s joy and happiness. He can’t stand to see others having a good time. It’s almost as if he wants to steal their happiness. He will spew his venom and transform a joyous gathering into a brawl. This is Loki’s nature. He is the harbinger of social decay, chaos and disorder. He is the enemy of social harmony and the homogeneous community. He is the father of anarchy and rootlessness. His ultimate crime in fomenting disorder and chaos is the killing of Balder.

One can argue that the Gods are part giant, but they are descended from Frost Giants, while Loki is a Fire Giant, the son of Surtur. In the end, he is shunned and driven out. He is often described as short and slight in stature, fair of face with impish eyes and eventually a crooked smile (because of his punishment for his lying nature), and possessing fire-red hair. But this description can be deceptive. During Ragnarok he reveals that he is actually a warrior and does battle with Heimdal, and the two kill each other. Heimdal is the Guardian of Asgard and thus the counter-force to Loki. It’s appropriate that the Heimdal, the Guardian, does battle with Loki. Heimdal is often referred to as the White God, who created the different races of mankind. Heimdal is a God of piety and pure in heart, and so can see through the lies and deceitfulness of Loki. Loki can’t deceive Heimdal by hiding his true nature from him. And so, when Loki leads the forces of darkness and destruction against Asgard during Ragnarok, he is unable to get pass Heimdal.

Loki is the Lord of Misrule and revolution. He ridicules order and traditions. He is of ambiguous gender who gave birth to Odin’s steed, Sleipnir, and dresses Thor as a woman, (he is the supporter of cross-dressing), he transforms himself

into an old hag who refuses to cry for Balder. When he wants to transform himself into a bird, he doesn't borrow Odin's eagle wings, but Freyja's falcon wings. Loki is the transgressor of all social taboos. He is the face of revolution and a threat to social order and a healthy society. He is the discordant face that causes the disintegration of social order. He is the antithesis of the forces that maintain order in the universe, and thus, brings on Ragnarok. His bane is Heimdal, the guardian of community and social order. As the master of lies, Loki is sometimes referred to as the creator of spiders, the weavers of webs (the web of lies). Like Prometheus, whose fire caused mankind to rebel against Zeus, Loki's flames cause the loosening of those bonds that hold together civilization by nurturing cosmopolitanism.

Loki creates so much evil that he is known as the arch deceiver. Of all the deities in the Norse pantheon, there never was a Cult of Loki. Men did not follow the fire-etin, for he was a force to be feared and avoided.

#### **IV: LOKI'S DAY:**

The last day of the week was held to be Loki's day. In old Norse, Saturday was known as Laugarday, or wash-day, but it was changed in old Anglo-Saxon England to Saturday. The name was derived not from Saturn, but from Sataere, the thief in ambush, who was supposed to be another manifestation of Loki. Since Sunday was Balder's day, and it was the first day of the week. It follows the last day of the previous week, which was assigned to Loki, thus completing the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

# 26

## *BALDER THE BEAUTIFUL*

### **I: THE GOD BELOVED:**

Odin and Frigga gave birth to twin sons. They were as dissimilar in spirit and physical appearance as night and day. Hodur, God of darkness, was somber, cold, unfeeling, uncommunicative and blind. He was the embodiment of blind ignorance. His brother was the exact opposite. He was named Balder, the beautiful God of light. Balder was worshiped as the radiant God of purity, innocence and light. His skin was white as snow, and his hair shined like the golden rays of the sun, and his eyes were a blue that reflected the clear waters of the seas. He was pure goodness and radiated beams of purity which gladden the hearts of Gods and men. Beloved by all, Balder is the embodiment of joy.

“Of all the twelve round Odin’s throne,  
Balder, the beautiful, alone,  
The sun-God, good, and pure, and bright,  
was loved by all, as all love light.”  
Valhalla (J. C. Jones)

Balder grew into his full manhood with remarkable rapidity, and was gladly admitted to the community of Gods. He possessed one of the twelve seats of the high council of the Gods. He lived in a palace named Breidabilk, which was made of golden pillars, which held up a silver roof. It radiated purity and nothing common or unclean could enter and violate its precincts. Here Balder and his wife, Nanna (Blossom) and his daughter, Nip (Bud), a beautiful Goddess, the personification of love and bliss, lived

Balder, the God of light, was a rune-master, and the runes were carved on his tongue. His eyes could see all, and even into the souls and hearts of Gods and men. He knew all and saw all, except for one fact—his own fate, which was hid-

den from his own radiant eyes. He is known as “the beautiful,” because his beauty is an expression of his perfection.

## II: BALDER’S DREAM:

One night a cry was heard through Breidabilk, as Balder struggled in his sleep. His dreams were disturbed by monstrous shapes and forms that seem to become one with the shadows they inhabited, they waited for the opportunity to sneer at the sun God. He moaned and twisted as he fought to wake and escape the horrors that inhabited his dreams. The fairest of the Gods had awakened, his hair radiated light, warm and soft, his brow gleaming white like newly fallen snow. He did not find calm as he laid in his bed. The shapes and forms that plagued his sleep seem to follow him into the world of wakening consciousness. He could not drive them from his thoughts. Night after night the ghastly apparitions returned, as if they were waiting for him to fall asleep. He resisted and fought, but could not escape. Try as he might, he could not shake the sense that doom was waiting for him.

The other Gods and Goddesses noticed the change in their beloved Balder. It was so natural for him to be a beacon of joy and light that the change was so startling. This fair and beautiful person never failed to bring joy to wherever he went. Always smiling, he was always a welcomed guest wherever he appeared. So it was natural that the Gods were concerned when Balder appeared troubled. They noticed a marked change in his bearing. His light seemed dim, his sparkling blue eyes appeared dull, and his face seemed shrouded in a dark shadow. Balder’s step seemed lifeless and his gait was sluggish.

Odin and Frigga, concerned about the apparent change in Balder’s bearing, wanted to learn what was troubling him. They implored him to tell them what could cause such grief in their beloved son. Balder confided in his parents and told them of the dark dreams that had invaded his sleep, and the sense of pending doom that seemed to hang onto him wherever he went.

As Balder slept, in deep dream,  
His sleep disturbed, by things unclean,  
he twist and turned, tried to scream,  
As he was stalked, by things unseen.

From shadows dark, and evil black,  
Death’s cold grip grasped, at Odin’s son,

In vain he tried, to drive back,  
But knew for him, that doom would come.

To his parents, Balder then told,  
of Shadows dark, dreams of gloom,  
Plagued by things' evil, dark and cold,  
That warned him of, impending doom.

(Robert Blumetti)

When the Gods and Goddesses heard of Balder's disturbing dreams, they began to discuss the significance of his nightmares. At first they were sure that there was nothing to them and that nothing could want to cause harm to their beloved Balder, who was universally loved. Nothing vile and impure had ever crossed the threshold of Breidablik, for Balder was good, his purity was untainted, and his light gave joy to all things in the nine worlds. But in time, as they thought over the darkness that had invaded his dreams, they grew more anxious because they could not unravel the significance of Balder's dreams. Then, anxiety turned to fear and all the Gods and Goddesses grew despondent by the strange forebodings that seemed to grip all of Asgard. Now all were oppressed with fear for Balder's life and talked of steps that should be taken to ward off the doom that laid in waiting for their beloved Balder.

Odin made up his mind to get to the bottom of the mystery. "I will go and consult one of the dead Vala, a prophetess, and extract from her the meaning of Balder's dreams." He mounted Sleipner, his eight-legged steed, and rode out of Asgard, over the massive rainbow bridge, Bifrost that led to a long road leading from Middle Earth down into the gloomy realm of the swirling mist and crushing ice, Niflheim. Odin passed Gjallarbru (the bridge over the under world river), and rode through the entrance of Hel's dark abode, the Helgate. Odin rode fast and with urgency. When he reached the place where Garm, the helhound that guards the gates to Hel, Garm rose up and threatened the All-Father. The hound's fur was caked with dry blood and its eyes burned red. He howled and snarled and his jaws clamped down as it bit into air. But the Rune-master ignored the hound. Sleipner galloped on with the fury of a thousand storms, and did not even slow as the grey steed and its rider reached Hel's dark and foreboding hall.

Odin finally dismounted Sleipner and entered the Hall of the Dead. He was surprised at what he saw within. The hall was filled with the souls of the dead. The inside was decorated with gold rings, gleaming ornaments and tapestries.

Great tables were covered with food and drink, as if everyone was expecting the arrival of an honored and important guest. He did not stop to ask for whom the feast was for, and led his steed to the spot where the seeress was buried. She laid beneath a great mound, undisturbed for many centuries. Odin stood next to Sliepner, his one eye fixed upon the mound and he began to chant a rune-spells with power to raise the dead.

Soon, the tomb opened and out of it, the pale specter of the prophetic rose into the air and hovered as she looked down upon Odin and his steed.

“Who dares to call me from my sleep?” she moaned. “What is the name of the stranger who stands before my grave and disturbs my rest? Long have I been dead and free from the cares of the nine worlds. Reveal yourself.”

Wishing to conceal his identity as the father of the Gods from the Vala, Odin gave a false name. “I am Vegtam the Wanderer, son of Valtam. I’ve disturbed your sleep to ask you for whom Hel has prepared a feast and decorates her hall with gold rings and tapestries?”

“The hall is laid with gold and the cauldron boils with mead for the honored Balder. His arrival will cause great grief among the Gods. I will say no more.”

But Odin would not let the seeress rest and asked a second question. “You must stay and tell me more. You must answer all the questions I put to you. If Balder is the guest that is expected, then he must die. You must tell me who will slay the most beloved son of Odin. Who will drain his lifeblood and extinguish his light?”

“I did not want to speak further, but you have willed me to tell,” the seeress cried. “So listen well. Balder’s twin brother, the blind Hodur will slay Balder and drain his lifeblood away and extinguish his light. Now let me rest for I will say no more.”

“You will stay and tell me more,” Odin command. “I have a need to know more so tell me who will take vengeance on Hodur for Balder’s death?”

The Vala moaned and then spoke once more. “Odin will lie with Rinda and they will produce a mighty son, Vali, born in Vestrsalir (The Western Hall). So powerful will Vali be, he will avenge Balder’s death when he is but one night old, and will dispatch Hodur to his death. Now that I have told you what you wanted to know, I will rest once more.”

Once more Odin refused to let the seeress return to her sleep. “You must answer another question,” Odin said. “You must tell me who will refuse to weep for the slang Balder?”

The question revealed Odin's powers of knowing the future to the Vala. She immediately recognized the All-Father standing before her. She knew that Vegtam was not his name, but his name was Odin.

"Your knowledge of the future has revealed you to me," she said. "Vegtam is not your name and Valtam is not your father. You are the All-Father, you are Odin, the father of the Gods, the magician, all at one time."

"And you are not Vala, the seeress, but the mother of three monsters," Odin said. "Nor are you all seeing."

"Go and leave this place, Odin. Ride back to Asgard and boast, while you can of your magic." The voice was shrill and filled with gloating. "I will not answer any more questions and I will not rise again until Loki breaks his chains, and leads all the forces of darkness against you and Asgard at the time of Ragnarok." The Vala now sunk back into her mound and her light faded.

Odin remounted his eight-legged steed, Sliepner, and rode out of Hel, back to Asgard. As he rode, thoughts raced through his mind and fermented into a plan. He knew he could not break the decree of Orlog (The fate or the Norns), and stop death from claiming his son, and with his death, the death of the Gods in Ragnarok. But if he could not stop the coming of Ragnarok, he would make Balder's death the instrument of his, and all the Gods' resurrection. Odin knew that the Vala was not what she pretends to be, for she was the mother of three monsters. Loki, the fire-tongue, the outlander, the alien, the she-horse and sex bender had shown himself for what he is, belonging to Suttur's brew. But Odin is all wise and would defeat the herald of the Gods' demise and cheat death itself.

### **III: FRIGGA'S OATH:**

A terrible gloom seemed to hail over Asgard. All the Gods and Goddesses now shared Balder's terrible dread. No one doubted now that Balder's black dreams would come true. Balder was doomed and so was his light. Everyone tried to think of a way to protect Balder, but no one could find a way to stop his doom from coming. Every means of death was discussed over and over until finally, Balder's mother, Frigga, decided to send her servants throughout the nine worlds of the universe and extract an oath not to cause Balder any harm from everything, small and great, seen and unseen, alive and not alive, animal, vegetable and mineral, from men, Gods and giants not to harm Balder. Even every kind of illness swore the oath. By the time Frigga's servants returned to her, every substance in the universe had taken the oath.



The Gods decided to put the oath to the test. They met in Gladsheim, where Balder stood unprotected, as each God stepped before him. One of them picked up a pebble and threw it at Balder, but the tiny stone withheld whatever powers it had and caused no harm, falling to earth harmlessly. Balder did not flinch. In fact, he did not even realize it had struck him. "I felt nothing at all," he said. The rest of the Gods cheered.

All the Gods now left Gladsheim laughing and reassured that Balder was safe from harm. A new light seemed to return to the universe. Gladsheim's golden walls and roof shined brilliantly. On the Idavoll fields the Gods and light elves, who were conducting business in Asgard, now gathered on the glowing green fields to rejoice in Balder's light, which would never go out. Everyone was glad to be alive.

## **IV: THE DEATH OF BALDER:**

In Gladsheim, the Gods would meet, while the Goddesses went to Vingolf. From these two great halls the Gods and Goddesses ruled Asgard and conducted what business there was necessary to govern. All matters of affairs in the nine worlds were discussed and agreed upon what course of action, if any, would be taken. Great heroic feats of the men of Middle Earth were discussed, and the affairs and movements of the giants were watched and given serious consideration. After the councils were concluded, both the Gods and Goddesses would meet and socialize, exchanging information and gossip, and then seek ways to amuse themselves. Great feasts were held and drink was generously consumed. Songs of great deeds by men and Gods were sung and jousting was common among the Gods to test their skills and mantle in battle.

From time to time, the Gods would check on Balder's state and test the oath taken by all things not to harm him. Pebbles were often tossed at him, but in time larger rocks and branches would soon be thrown at him, but all things always fell harmlessly to the ground without Balder even realizing anything had struck his person. Even if the objects struck his face, Balder would always respond in the same way. "I felt nothing, nothing at all."

This delighted the Gods and everyone laughed and sang because all believed that doom had been diverted for all time. In time the Gods grew bolder in their play with their beloved Balder. Balder now stood before a wall on the Idavold fields, where he let the other Gods try and hit him. Logs were used and soon boulders as large as a house were thrown at Balder, but nothing could harm the sun God. Eventually the Gods began throwing weapons at Balder. Even Thor's

mighty hammer, Mjollnir (the crusher), which could kill the most powerful giants, didn't even phase Balder. Balder was impervious to everything and even the most violent attacks were not noticed. This only delighted all the Gods. Everyone rejoiced, sang and celebrated at the impossibility of harm coming to Balder. Light and joy filled all of Asgard, and everyone in that most heavenly of worlds was glad for Balder—that is, all except for one.

Loki, the eternal outsider, could not share in the joy that the Gods of Asgard felt. He remained to one side, watching the merriment with black distaste that seemed to eat away at his soul. Loki, the personification of fire, not the fire of the hearth that gives warmth and light and cooks you food, but the ravenous flames of the firestorm that destroys and consumes. His flames were eclipsed by Balder, the sun God, and while all fled before Loki's burning touch, everyone and everything sought out Balder, for all loved his light. Loki delighted in laying waste to all that is good. Suffering nourished him and trouble and chaos sprang from his twisted thoughts. It sickened him to see Balder immune from harm and the cause of such happiness and joy. His hatred for the Gods grew, but it was nothing compared to the vile hatred that he felt for the beloved Balder. He refused to take part in the games, but he could not stay away.

One day, as Loki watched the games the Gods played with Balder, an idea was born in his dark and twisted thoughts. The lids of his eyes were now half closed. His tongue danced about his deformed lips as if the black thoughts that now grew within his mind tasted sweet. His crooked mouth slowly grew into a wicked smile. An evil plan was born behind his brow. Loki slipped away when no one was looking and headed for the great hall of Fensalir, where Frigga, the mother of the Gods sat contentedly, spinning happily in the thought that her son Balder was safe from harm.

When Loki was out of sight, he spoke some magic chants and transformed his shape, turning himself into an old woman. He finally reached Frigga's hall and sniffed and wiped his nose as he hobbled on his way. When he saw Frigga sitting alone, spinning and singing in joy, he interrupted her with a question. "Where am I?" he asked.

"You are in my hall, Fensalir, and I am Frigga," the mother-Goddess said as she greeted the old woman and welcomed her to her abode.

"I would rather be home," the old woman said. "It is a long way from here."

Frigga listened with patience as the old woman complained, and then asked the old woman about the merriment she could hear coming from outside.

"Oh, that noise. That poor man. His face so white and shining with a light so bright and warm. Everyone must hate him because they're trying to stone him.

What cowards. All those many against one defenseless young man. Someone should do something to save him.”

Frigga smiled at the concern the old woman expressed over Balder’s safety. She explained to the old woman that there was nothing to worry about. The crowd gathered around Balder was not trying to harm him, because he was invulnerable to all harm. She explained how they were just playing a game.

“How can that be?” the old woman wondered.

Frigga then laid out in detail how she extracted an oath from all things in the nine worlds never to cause any harm to her son, Balder.

“Everything? You mean nothing can harm him? Not even fire or ice?”

“Yes, that’s right,” Frigga answered.

“Not metal or stone or wood?”

“No. Nothing,” Frigga smiled as she answered.

The old woman wrinkled her nose and rubbed her chin as if she was trying to understand everything that the mother-Goddess had told her. “Nothing can harm him, you say?”

Frigga nodded.

“You really mean nothing? Is there anything in all the nine worlds that did not take the oath?”

Frigga thought and then remembered. “Well, all but one small thing.” The old woman’s brows rose. “One little vine that grows on the mighty oak, called the mistletoe. It is so small and lives on the Gods favorite tree that I did not think to ask it to take the oath. But what harm could such a small vine cause?”

Loki in the guise of the old woman knew the answer to Frigga’s question, but he did not tell her. He guarded the secret. He knew that a potent poison could be brewed from the mistletoe, for he was a master at making potions and poisons.

“Well, so long as the dear young man is in no danger, and I do have such a long way to go, I really must be off. I thank you for your kind words and for putting my old heart at rest. I shall take my leave of you, dear lady.” And without another word, Loki turned and hobbled his way out of Fensalir, not looking back at Frigga. His wrinkled old mouth was twisted into a smile as was the evil plan that was being formed in his head.

As soon as Loki was out of sight, he muttered the magic spell and resumed his old form. He quickly crossed the plains of Idavold, toward Valhalla. Night was approaching and darkness was descending upon Asgard. When he reached Valhalla, he heard the shouts and songs from the Einherjar within the great hall. Loki smirked at the merriment and quickly hurried on his way around the western gate of the hall. He found a grove and within it a mighty oak tree. Upon the

trunk of the oak, rooted in neither earth nor water, was the tiny parasite vine, mistletoe.

Its leaves were green and yellow-green, and its berries were pearl-like in appearance. Loki grabbed the little parasite and pulled it free of the trunk. He touched and examined the mistletoe and then looked about, left and right, to see if anyone was watching him. When he was confident that he was unseen, he quickly left the way he came, passing by Valhalla as swiftly as possible, and making sure no one noticed him. Down the path that he had traveled to reach Valhalla, he went, until he had passed Frigga's Fensalir and made his way back to the Idavold fields. He examined the mistletoe, picking off branches, berries and leaves and shaped it into a straight dart about the length of his forearm. Soon he had fashioned it into a perfect dart, transforming its soft branch into a hard dart. Using his magical skills, he caused the sap to turn into a deadly poison. It no longer looked like the mistletoe that he took from the oak, and it possessed an unnatural appearance. He was sure that no one would suspect what it really was.

When Loki finally returned to the Idavold fields, the Gods were still hurling their weapons at Balder in the dimming light of dusk. The game was about to breakup, when Loki arrived. No one had noticed him leave, nor did they see him return. Loki looked around under half-closed eyes. He saw that Frigga had now joined the company. He continued to look about until he spied the object of his search. There, leaning against a tree was Balder's twin brother, Hodur, the blind God of darkness. He appeared a pathetic sight standing alone and fumbling about. Loki approached Hodur, feigning interest. He was about to speak when the laughter from the Gods' joy that Balder was still unharmed caused him to cringe. The joy that the Gods felt over Balder's invulnerably was painful to Loki. His hate caused his deformed lips to twist into a cruel grin. When the laughter died down, Loki straightened up and sidled up to Hodur. Placing a hand on Hodur's shoulder, he asked why Hodur did not join in the game.

"Why aren't you playing sport with Balder as the others do?" Loki asked.

"Because I don't have a weapon to throw at Balder," Hodur said. "Besides, even if I had a weapon, I could not aim it and throw it at Balder because I'm blind and can't see."

Loki smiled a crooked grin. "You mean to say that none of the other Gods have invited you to join in the game? They didn't lend you a weapon, or offered to help you to throw it at Balder? This cannot stand. I have a dart that I was going to throw at Balder, but you can have it instead. Here, let me help you."

Loki put the mistletoe dart in Hodur's hand and led him through the crowd to where he could throw the dart at Balder.

“Here,” Loki instructed Hodur. “Raise the dart and throw it when I tell you. But first let me point you in the right direction.”

Loki aimed Hodur toward Balder and stood behind him, instructing him on how far away Balder stood and how hard he should throw the dart. Hodur raised the dart in his hand. Lifting it over his head, he pulled it back and then flung it toward Balder, just as Loki instructed. It was so easy for the outsider, the alien that could never truly become part of the Gods of Asgard, who lusts for their destruction, to manipulate the God of blind ignorance, who could not see his brother’s light, into destroying the lifeblood of the Gods. Hodur willingly followed Loki’s instructions. Being blind, he could not recognize the alien manipulating him in to dooming his own race.

Loki watched as the dart flew across the distance between Hodur and Balder. His hands rubbed over each other and his eyes burned with gleam. His whole body shook with anticipation and the expression on his face was that of a hungry wolf about to pounce upon its unsuspecting victim.

The dart struck Balder, but instead of falling harmlessly to the ground as all the other weapons did, it penetrated his flesh and passed through him. The light drained from Balder’s face and all the lifeblood drained from him as his body went limp and he fell silently to the ground.

Silence and shock descended on the Idavold fields. Everyone froze in horror and stood dumbfounded at the sight before them. On the fields laid Balder, lifeless and still. So unconsolable was everyone that they could not move, nor speak.

Eventually shock and grief turned to anger. Everyone stared at Hodur and Loki, and they instantly understood who was responsible for Balder’s death. For the first time, all the Gods and Goddesses could see Loki for what he truly was—the outsider, the evil that dwelled amongst them, pretending to be their friend, but all the time sought their destruction because he could never really be one of them. There were no more smoothing words to convince them that they were mistaken about his intention, or that he was truly sorry about what had happened. His fiery-destructive nature was finally laid bare for all to see, and they were repulsed by his true nature. The same thoughts raced through all their heads, and if they could, they would have taken vengeance on blind ignorance and the outsider, but they could not. The ground of Idavold Fields was hallow and no one could shed blood on this most sacred sanctuary. It was the law of Asgard that violent deeds could not wilfully be committed on the fields of peace.

Hodur could not know what anger was aimed at him, but Loki instantly understood, and he fled into the darkness.

Finally, the Goddesses could no longer contain their wild grief and began weeping for their lost. Soon the floodgates of sorrow were opened and all joined them in expressing their pain. No one could find the words to describe their lost, so choked they were in their grief.

Of all the Gods, Odin alone remained silent, as if the lamentation of the Gods and Goddesses had turned him to stone. He, of all the Gods, the wisest in the nine worlds, understood the extent of the evil that was unleashed by Balder's death. He also understood that what was foretold would come to pass and Ragnarok would claim them all.

The mother-Goddess's grief was the greatest, for what pain is greater than that of a mother who has suffered the loss of her child? The wailing was broken by Frigga's words. "Who in Asgard wishes to win my everlasting love and gratitude?" Frigga asked.

Everyone looked at Frigga. Their sorrow swelled at the sight of Frigga's grief. Her words were filled with her pain.

"Is there anyone brave enough to ride to Hel and plead on my behalf, for the return of my son to me?"

Frigga was overcome by grief once more and could not speak. She struggled to find the strength to ask once more.

"Will no one ride the road to Hel's hall in my name and implore the mistress of death to release Balder to me?"

No one spoke except for Hermod, who immediately walked up to the mother-Goddess. His apathy was clearly visible in the expression on his face. He fought not to succumb to the pain that he felt. "I will ride the road to the netherworld for you, my Lady."

Frigga embraced the son of Odin and held him long and hard as she fought to hold back the tears. Hermod was the bravest and boldest among Odin's sons. He was renowned for his daring.

Odin called for his servants and ordered them to bring to him his eight-legged steed, Sliepner. They hurried away and soon returned, leading the grey horse behind them. Odin gave the horse to Hermod and bid him hast.

"Take Sliepner, the fastest horse in all the nine worlds and ride to Hel," Odin said to Hermod.

Hermod didn't hesitate and instantly jumped into Sliepner's saddle. He pulled on the reins and without even waiting to say a word, he rode faster than the wind out of Asgard and across the rainbow bridge. Heimdall, the guardian of the gates of Asgard watched Hermod as he rode into the night towards Hel's

abode. All who remained behind began to hope once more and wished bold Hermod well on his desperate ride to Hel.

## **V: BALDER'S FUNERAL:**

After Hermod left, the Gods and Goddesses remained for some time upon the fields of Idavold. They kept a silent vigil over the body of Balder. Odin scooped up the dry blood of his fallen son and saved it. No one spoke for a long time. They were deep in thought about what was to happen next. Many wondered if Hel would surrender the beloved sun God to them. Some thought about what kind of revenge should be dealt out to Hodur and especially to Loki.

When the new day dawned, the Gods found themselves still upon the Idavold fields. Odin now called for them to ready Balder for his funeral. As they lift to prepare the funeral, they noticed a terrible storm looming on the horizon, and the Gods knew instinctively that this was no ordinary storm. They carried Balder reverently down to the shore where his great ship, the Ringhorn was docked. Odin directed the Gods to cut down the huge pines in the forest, gather the wood together, and build a pyre in Balder's boat for a proper funeral. The pyre they constructed was huge and it was decorated with hanging tapestries, garlands of many different beautiful and sweet-smelling flowers, a large variety of weapons, and countless precious objects of value.

When the Gods tried to lower the Ringhorn into the water, they discovered that they were too weak from grief. The death of their beloved Balder sapped the youth and strength from them. Odin then called for a giantess to help them. Hyrrokin answered Odin's call. She rode out of Joetunheim, across the rainbow bridge into Asgard, on a terrible wolf and held onto reins made from poisonous snakes. After she dismounted, she asked Odin to take care of her steed. Odin sent four Berserkers to contain the fierce wolf so it could do no harm.

The wolf howled and its terrible jaws snapped the air when it saw the four men, wearing animal skins, approach. The Berserkers seized the reins and pulled with all their might, trying to contain the wolf. But struggle as they might, they could not subdue the beast. The wolf resisted and its paws mauled the ground as it tried to break free. This caused the Berserkers to become angry and they set upon the beast with their fists. They pounded the wolf so hard with their deadly blows that it soon laid lifeless upon the beach.

Hyrrokin strode along the dock to where Balder's ship was resting on the moorings. The ship was gigantic but graceful and sweeping in shape. Hyrrokin gripped the ship and with her shoulder pushed her enormous strength against the

stern of the ship and heaved until the ship began to roll along the logs. With incredible speed the ship rolled over the logs and burst into flames, and then plunged into the sea, causing waves to roll and rock the ship.

Believing Hyrrokin was acting irreverent toward Balder, Thor's temper, which was easily aroused, exploded like thunderstorms, he raised his hammer as if to strike down the giantess.

"How dare you show such disrespect?" Thor thundered. "You had better show the proper respect." Thor's exploding anger recharged his strength. But Odin and some of the other Gods restrained Thor from killing Hyrrokin, who snared at the thunder God.

"Lower your hammer, my son," Odin said. "She is here at my bidding."

"I'll crack her head open," Thor shouted.

"No harm must come to the giantess," Odin insisted. "Ignore her. There is more important business at hand and I will not permit this most solemn occasion to be tainted by violence. Thor's volcanic temper subsided. The fire in his eyes died out and he settled down as the All-Father commanded.

Four Gods carried Balder's body into the water and placed it into the Ringhorn, and upon the high pyre within the ship. His body was covered with a crimson cloth.

Odin called on the Gods to now step forward and pay their last respects to his son.

Nanna, Balder's wife approached the lifeless body of her beloved husband. So beautiful was Balder in death he seemed almost alive. She struggled to control herself, but the pain was too great. Without even crying or shedding a tear, her heart finally broke and she surrendered her soul, and her lifeless body slipped to the ground. Nanna's love for Balder was so great that she could not bear to live without him. She preferred to reside in Hel's hall with her husband then to continue to live without him in Asgard. She was carefully lifted by the other Gods and laid to rest, in the Ringhorn, next to Balder.

Those who had come to pay their last respects to the fallen God of light had swelled into a huge crowd. All the Gods and elves in Asgard, Vanaheim and Ljosalfheim were present. Odin stood before them with his two ravens, Hugin and Munin, perched on his shoulders, and his two wolves, Geri and Freki at his feet. Frigg stood next to him and behind him stood his daughters, the Valkyries: Shaker, Mist, Axe Time, Raging, Warrior, Might, Shrieking, Host Fetter, Screaming, Spear Bearer, Shield Bearer, Wrecker of Plans, the Chooser of the Slain, the Bearers of the Heroic, the Gathers of the Courageous, all shining and bright, beautiful and fierce maidens with the Father of Battles.



Frey rode upon his chariot, pulled by Gullinbursti, the golden-bristled boar forged by the dwarves Brokk and Eitri. His twin sister, Freyja, rode along side of him, in her chariot pulled by her cats. She wore her necklace, the Brisingamen around her neck, which twinkled and sparkled. Heimdall was also present, dressed in his white armor and sitting upon his mount, Gold Tuft. The one-handed God, Tyr was there, and so was Idun with her golden apples. She passed them out to help revive the Gods' depleted strength.

There was also a large host of elves, bright and luminous, and a horde of dwarves from Svatafheim, in all shapes and sizes. After Hyrrokin arrived in Asgard, the rest of the Frost Giants followed her out of Jotunheim. So many came to see Balder off that their numbers were greater than the number of grains of sand on the beach. Before the fire was set and Ringhorn put out to sea, Balder's horse galloped up to the water's edge and leaped onto the ship. He refused to leave his master and wished to join him on his journey to Hel. His neck and body were cut into many small pieces and placed onto the pyre, to be burned with Balder and Nanna.

Finally, Odin climbed onto the ship and stood for a while over his fallen son. He examined Balder's face. Even in death it was so beautiful and pure. Odin knew the significance of Balder's death, and that there was no way it could have been stopped. He also knew that it was meant to happen, even as he tried to stop it, or undo it, it must be. The future of the Gods depended upon Balder's death that would herald Ragnarok, but it would also be Odin's device for defeating Ragnarok. Balder was his instrument for the resurrection of the Gods, and the children of the Gods. He and all the other Gods would be reborn through Balder, who would wait out the passing of Ragnarok in Hel, and afterwards herald in the golden age of Gimli.

Slowly, Odin removed his arm-ring, Draupnir, which dropped eight rings every ninth night. Odin slipped it on Balder's arm. Its regenerative powers would be needed in the new age. He then bent over his son and brought his lips close to Balder's ear and whispered that which has been hidden from man and God until now. He spoke a magic spell of three runes. The first rune is the rune Dagaz, the rune of synthesis and group. Of evolution into a higher form. Without it there is no evolution, no progression. The second rune was Nauthiz, the rune of need that rises from deep within us, and contains self-generating power. Third was Ansuz, the rune of consciousness, the magico-ancestral power that is passed down through the generations through the blood, or genes, the rune of the life-force of the All-Father that shaped humanity and gave us life.

Odin then stood up with arms stretched out before him, as he addressed the nine worlds. He held up a cup and in it was the dried blood of Balder. His life-force, which is the life-force of all things Gods, men, elves and dwarves, resided within the blood. "I have given my best and purest son, a sacrifice from me to myself, and through his death, a new age and a better world will rise from the ashes of the old. He is our victory over inevitable defeat."

Odin then lowered his arms, turned and left the Ringhorn, returning to the shore. His servants now stepped forward and flung burning torches into Balder's ship. As the fires gradually consumed the pyre, Thor stood before the ship, holding his mighty hammer before him. Lifting it, he blessed it with its regenerative powers, hallowing the cremation. Before he finished, a dwarf by the name of Lit ran in front of Thor. Angry at the dwarf's irreverence, Thor kicked him so hard that he flew into the rising flames. He was burned to death, consumed along with the pair of divine bodies.

The great ship was now pushed out into the sea. It was taken by the currents and carried out into the vast Western ocean, rocking and swaying upon crystal waves. The flames now leaped high and a column of smoke rose into the dusking sky, as the ship sailed into the disappearing horizon. As it did, those upon the beach wept and talked about their beloved Balder. They remained on the shore until the last traces of the smoke disappeared in the distance, and the ship was claimed by the sea, and darkness descended upon the nine worlds. Finally, they made their way home, knowing that the darkness that was engulfing them was the beginning of the end.

## **VI: HERMOD'S RIDE TO HEL:**

For nine nights, Sleipnir raced along the road to the Netherworld. He carried Hermod across over hills and mountains, through oppressive ice cold darkness and many rivers that flowed out of the Niflheim well, Hvergelmir. Sleipnir crossed the bridges that expand the river Svol, with icy cold waters, and the stormy waters of Hrid, the vastness of Vid and the bubbling cauldron of Fimbulthul. Finally, rider and steed came to the tremendous bridge that stretched across the freezing currents of the river, Gjoll that separated Hel's domain from the other worlds. The bridge that expands this dark river was arched with crystal and paved and thatched with gleaming gold and held in place by a single strand of hair.

Once on the other side of the golden thatched bridge Hermod was confronted by the maiden, Modgud, who stood guard over the entrance to Hel for her mis-

tress. She demanded a toll of blood as payment for passing. She challenged Hermod, raising her pale hand. She was dressed in black and her pallor was eerie white. "Tell me who you are and why does the living ride the road that leads to the realm of the dead?" she asked.

"I am Hermod," the God said. "I ride in the name of Odin, on his steed for Frigga. I have urgent business with your mistress, Hel, Queen of the Dead."

"Why would Odin send one who is clearly not dead to speak with Hel?" Modgud asked.

"I come in search of my brother, Balder. Have you seen him? Has he passed this way?"

"A great host of dead men passed over the bridge yesterday. With them rode Balder on his steed and at his side was Nanna, his wife."

"Then I must follow," Hermod said and he thanked Modgud and bid her to step aside, which she did. Hermod pulled on Sleipnir's reins and Odin's steed raced away faster than the wind, northward and downward along the road which took them further into the darkness.

After a long time traveling through the Iron Woods, where the trees are black with leaves of sharp iron, they came to the Hel-gates in the black walls that surrounded Hel's domain. Garm was there to keep the souls from escaping, but he could not keep Hermod and Odin's steed from fulfilling their quest. So fearsome and black it was, it stood out dreadfully against the darkness that filled this world. Hermod dismounted and stood in the darkness before the gates. He examined the gates, which towered over him. The gates were locked to him, for only the dead are permitted to pass through them to Nastrond, to the Shore of the Corpses that laid within. Hermod was determined not to be barred from entering. He remounted Sleipnir and pulled on the reins. Sleipnir turned and ran a short distance away from the gates. Odin's mount finally stopped and turned black once more. Hermod's eyes were locked under frowning brows. He held the reins tight and then buried his spurs deep into Sleipnir's sides. The horse galloped forward at incredible speed, faster than the strongest winds. Its four hind legs pushed the horse up with such strength that Sleipnir flew into the air and over the gates. Horse and rider flew over the gates that guarded Hel and landed beyond the wall.

Riding in, Hermod did not stop until he reached Hel's hall, Eljundnir. He dismounted and without waiting for an invitation, he entered the cavernous hall. Countless faces turned at the appearance of the living among them. They were the faces of the dead, grey and green, rotting flesh, suffering faces of the damned. They could not turn away from Hermod. His life-force called to them like nour-

ishment to a starving man. But Hermod ignored them. All he could see was beautiful Balder, sitting upon the most high seat, radiating light of purity among the dead. Sitting next to him was his wife, Nanna.

Hermod remained in the hall with Balder and Nanna all night. He suffered the presence of the dead for the sake of the Gods. They could not speak to him unless he spoke to them first, which he did not. He informed his brother that he had come to redeem him, and seek Hel's permission to release him from her embrace.

Balder smiled at Hermod's determination in the face of the futility of his quest. "You seek the impossible, my dear brother," Balder said. "I must remain as Hel's guest, for it is not time for me to return to the world of the living."

"No. Don't say such a thing," Hermod pleaded with his brother. "I must succeed."

"Then try," Balder said, and he smiled once more. "But I beg you to take my wife with you back to Asgard if you can't secure my release. The domain of shades and shadows is no place for one so loving as my dear Nanna."

But when Nanna heard this, she refused Balder's request and was determined to remain with her husband, and never leave his side.

Hermod waited all night with Balder and Nanna for Hel to rise from her Sick Bed. When she finally did, she drew back its hangings, the Glimmering Misfortune, and instantly was aware of the living in her domain of the dead. She rose and made her way toward Hermod. Her face and body were that of a beautiful, living woman, but her thighs and legs belonged to a corpse's, made-up of rotting and putrid flesh. As she crept across the hall, gloom seemed to follow her.

Hermod greeted Hel and implored her to permit his counsel. She said nothing, but simply nodded her permission. One does not refuse the request of the son of the All-Father. Hermod recited the events that transpired in detail leading up to the death of Balder. He used all his skills to win the sympathy of the Mistress of Death for the plight of the Gods. She listened to everything Hermod said, patiently and in silence. When he finally asked Hel to release Balder and Nanna and permit them to ride with him back to the world of the living, she sighed and asked if Balder was truly as beloved by all, as Hermod claimed. He assured her that he was.

Hel's impression did not change. She said nothing for some time as she thought over everything Hermod told her. When she finally spoke, she did so with a slowness that seemed eternal. Each word was punctuated by long periods of silence. She said she would permit Balder to leave her domain, if the Gods could convince all things, animated and unanimated, to weep for Balder. If they

failed, then Balder would remain in Hel. Then she turned and like a shadow, she gradually disappeared into the gloom that filled her domain.

There were many who awaited the judgement of Hel. The wicked, she would condemn to the Nastrond, where they waded in freezing venom only to be cast into the cauldron of Hvangelmir to serve as food for the great Nodhogg, who paused from gnawing on the roots of the World-Tree to feed on their bones. Those not wicked, but had died “a straw death” would spend eternity in Hel without bliss or suffering. What is meant by a straw death was not the way one died, but the way one lived. It did not mean that a man or woman died in their beds, but in life they were like a straw man. There was no substance within them. For a straw man does not truly live, but only exists. These were the people who lived lives of no meaning. In life, their souls were not nourished by any greater idealism. They were born, existed and then died. To live for a greater ideal is a truly heroic life and to do so is to spend eternity with the Gods. Only those who lived for a higher principle would be born again after Balder’s resurrection, and join him in Gimli.

Hermod was filled with encouragement at Hel’s terms. He knew all things loved Balder and nothing or no one would not weep for him. He was sure nothing would refuse Hel’s request because all things loved Balder, the God of light and purity.

Hermod now saw Balder and Nanna across the length of the hall, heading right for him. The sea of the dead parted before his radiance. Balder appeared all white and encased in a halo. Hermod greeted Balder and his wife once more and informed them of Hel’s terms. Balder was sad and only smiled half-heartedly. He knew what Hermod refused to accept. Balder was where he belonged and nothing could be done to return him to the living. But Hermod still insisted that there was hope.

“It has been more than nine nights since my father place Daupnir on my arm,” Balder said. “The rings have produced eight additional copies of themselves this night. I give this to you to return them to my father as a token of my destiny, and remembrance of me.”

Nanna then gave Hermod a golden ring and some linen to give to Fulla, Frigga’s servant, so that she might present it to the Mother Goddess when Hermod returned to Asgard.

Hermod took the gifts and promised he would do as they asked. He then took his leave of Balder and Nanna and departed from the hall. Once outside, he mounted Sleipnir and rode out of Hel and back across the road that took him to

the realm of the dead. As he rode, the way was lit with the new found hope that shined deep within his heart.

## VII: HERMOND'S RETURN:

When Hermod rode into Asgard, the Gods gathered around, anxiously waiting to hear what word he brought back from Hel. After Hermod distributed the gifts from Balder and Nanna, he told the Gods of Hel's terms. The Aesir sent messengers to every part of the nine worlds to bid all things to swear that they would weep for Balder. Wherever the heralds went, they convinced all things, animated and unanimated, to weep for Balder. Fire and water, the clouds in the sky, the stars in the heavens, all metals and rocks, trees, grass and all forms of vegetation, every animal, bird, insect, fish and even every form of disease and bacteria cried. All mortals, Gods, giants, dwarves and elves cried for Balder.

After the messengers had contracted their oaths for Balder, and were sure they overlooked nothing, they returned to Asgard. It was then that they spotted a cave along side the road, not to far from Asgard. Within the cave was an old, ugly giantess, sitting by herself.

The heralds approached her and asked the giantess her name.

"I am called, Thokk," the old giantess said.

The messengers explained their mission and asked her to join all the universe in weeping for Balder, so Hel would release him and return him to Asgard.

The giantess laughed wickedly at the messengers, and mocked them as she answered. "I never cared for that poor excuse for a God. I will not shed a single tear for Balder. You can go back to Asgard and tell that old man with one eye that Hel can keep his brat for all eternity as far as I care."

The messengers were stunted. They began begging Thokk to reconsider, but she only laughed at them and then spit on the ground, damning Balder and all the Gods. The messengers said no more. They stood like statues of stone, watching the old giantess slowly making her way back into the blackness of her cave, laughing a terrible and evil laugh. But her evil was so black and obvious that the messengers could see through her disguise and saw not Thokk, but Loki walking into the cave.

The messengers turned away from the cave and mournfully crossed Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge to Asgard. The Gods came running when Heimdal announced their arrival. Their faces were aglow with anticipation and hope. But when they saw the long faces on the messengers, they knew that they had failed in their mission. They told the Gods of how they met Loki in disguise as a giantess

and repeated everything he said. Thor cried out in pain, so terrible that storms wrecked the nine worlds. Freyja's tears of gold filled the fields of Idavold. But the most terrible grief was expressed by Balder's mother, Frigga. Odin's anger could not be contained and ordered that Loki must be found and punished for his evil deeds. But first, justice must be dealt out to Hodur.

## **VIII: VALI AVENGES BALDER:**

Odin sought out Rinda, an earth Goddess, but she rebuffed him each time Odin proposed union. But finally she succumbed to Odin. Their union produced a wondrous son, who grew to full manhood before his first day of life was completed. He was called, Vali the Avenger, and instantly set out to seek Balder's dark brother, Hodur. He slew Hodur with an arrow from his bow, and put an end to the veil of blind ignorance. The death of Balder was avenged with blood, as is written in the runes on Odin's spear that a life unjustly taken must be paid with a life. This is called justice.

## **IX: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STORY OF BALDER:**

Balder represents truth. His light is the truth of reality. He is knowledge of those principles that all people must respect and abide by if they are to remain fruitful and productive, remain healthy and grow. Balder's invulnerability springs from his blood-purity. His blood-purity is the light of the life-force that resides in the lifeblood—our blood, our DNA. It is this light, which originates with the life-force that gives him his immortality. This immortality is taken from him by the use of the mistletoe, which can be used to make both a very powerful poison that kills as well as a love potion. When used by blind ignorance (Hodur), and motivated by the destructive forces of chaos (Loki), love can kill the purity and thus rob us of our immortality (future generations of our Folk). Thus love, like everything else, can be used for good or evil. The right type of love brings happiness, but the wrong type of love plunges us into darkness. Balder represents the need for people to respect their lifeblood, by preserving the purity of their bodies and souls—the right type of love. This purity has been handed down to us by our ancestors, and it the duty of every individual to pass it is down to their descendants.

When we walk in Balder's light, we are aware of his purity and the importance it plays in our life, and the lives of our people. And while Balder represents a state of purity, his wife, Nanna, represents the reproductive or procreative powers. She represented the growth and expansion of our people—its continuation, both quantitatively and qualitatively. When Balder dies, Nanna wishes to join him in Hel, and refuses to leave him. This means that when we extinguish the light of self-awareness, and knowledge of one's self-worth, we as a people, will no longer reproduce, no longer grow and eventually become extinct.

We live today in a state of ignorance. We have lost the knowledge of those truths that are necessary for our survival, because the light of Balder has gone out. It has been extinguished by blind ignorance. This has led to a loss in our fertility as a race, and a birth death. Our people no longer have children. As a result, our Folk is dying due to a decline in the family unit, low birth rates, is disconnected to its past and heritage and suffers from a loss in its self-esteem.

The reason for this, is the triumph of Hodur, the God of darkness who represents blind ignorance over Balder, the God of light and enlightenment. We now walk with Hodur, in ignorance because we are blinded to the truth. We are blind to the truths that Balder represents. If we are to flourish as a people, we must once again adhere to the right circumstances, the power of the Gods over Middle Earth increases.

Some claim that Snorri, the Medieval Christian chronicler was influenced by his Christian beliefs when he told the story of Balder, but Christianity was influenced by the Tale of Balder. Snorri describes Balder as the "Wisest of the Gods. The most beautifully spoken, and most gentle. He is both the beautiful and suffering God. He is passive, and yet his name means "bold" and "ruler." His wife's name, Nanna, means "courageous" and "battle joy." Balder is both a God of war and peace, like Freyja.

He is known as the Heilaga (The Holy sacrifice). Balder's death is another manifestation of Odin's own sacrifice of himself to himself, when he hung himself on the World Tree for nine days and nights. Balder is Odin reborn in new form, but he is much more. He is all the Gods and Goddesses reborn in new form. He is the instrument of his own resurrection. Balder is the means by which Odin cheats the Norns' fate for the Gods. He is able to counter the fatalism of Ragnarok.

When Odin gave Balder Draupnir, he gave him the means of reproducing the Gods. It is this device that ensures the rebirth of the Gods. After the rings reproduce themselves, Balder gives them to Hermod to return to Odin. This is the forging of the bond between Odin and Balder. When Odin receives the rings, he



knows that the Gods will survive Ragnarok, but first they must perish in it. Draupnir is the symbol of death and rebirth.

Odin collected Balder's blood and eventually gave it to Aeger to brew an ale or mead in the great cauldron (the Holy Grail). The blood of Balder is the lifeblood of man and God.

Balder's death is a transformation ritual. He does not join the heros in Valhalla, though he does suffer a heroic death. He dies, goes to Hel and returns after Ragnarok even more powerful, and the world is reborn. Balder's death is Odin's transformation. His death is the fall and resurrection of the Cosmos. The nine worlds weep for Balder because his death heralds the coming of Ragnarok and the death of the nine worlds. But it is also the agency of the Cosmos' resurrection.

Balder is the seed of hope. He is like Siegfried, the brave young hero who knows no fear. His sacrifice heralds in the end of the old age and the birth of a new and better age. He is Odin's plan to survive Ragnarok. Balder is not a God to call for help, but rather cultivate his purity. He waits to be called back through our deeds, thoughts, and actions. His might is not in what he has done, but in his return and the promise for a better future and world.

## **X: THE WORSHIP OF BALDER:**

Sunday is Balder's day and his rune is Sowilo. The most important festival in the name of Balder was held at the summer solstice, or midsummer's day. The festival was held in honor of the anniversary of Balder's death his descent into the netherworld. Balder is the Sun God and this is the longest day of the year. The sun rules longer on this day than any other day of the year. People congregated out doors, lite great bonfires, danced around the fires, chanting and singing Balder's praise. They watched the sun set. In the distant northern lands, the sun didn't stay below the horizon for long. From midsummer day on the days gradually grew shorter, and the sun's rays less warm. This cycle came to an end with the winter's solstice, which was called "Mother's Day," and was the longest night of the year. After the northern lands became Christianized, Midsummer's day was renamed St. John's day in an attempt to supplant Balder with this saint.

The yearly cycle represents Balder's journey. At Midsummer day, Balder is killed and for the next three months, until the Autumn, we must think of Balder's death and his journey to Hel. From the Winter's Solstice to the Spring Equinox, we should think about Balder's return back to the world of the living. At the Spring Quixote Balder is reborn, and for the next three months he is

among the living until we reach midsummer day and the cycle begins all over again—resurrection, rebirth, death and descent.

## *RAGNAROK: THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS*

### **I: THE DECLINE OF THE GODS:**

The Gods had tolerated the presence of evil, in the personification of Loki within their midst, and often followed his advice. They foolishly permitted him to involve himself in their affairs, which only resulted in the loss of part of their virtue, as a price for undoing the harm he caused. In time, they looked the other way while he slowly gained ascendancy over them until he was confident enough that he possessed the power to rob them of their dearest possession—their purity and innocence, personified by Balder.

Balder was now dead. He and his wife, Nanna, were in Hel. His blind brother, Hodur was also within the netherworld. When the Gods had finally woken up to the evil spirit that dwelled among them, it was too late for them to prevent their eventual doom. Then Loki was bound, but men had learned his ways and had been corrupted by his sinister influence. The bonds between mankind and the Gods were poisoned by Loki's spirit. The Folk grew corrupt and lost its special relationship with their Gods. Wars were waged for alien causes that filled Valhalla until it was overcrowded with the growing ranks of the Einherjar. Shadows seem to plunge Asgard into darkness, and Jortunheim was stirring with giants making threatening noise. In Midgard, men had turned their backs on the Gods, and were seduced by the evil nihilism that Loki nurtured. Treachery, immorality, greed, nihilism, narcissism and chaos spread like plaque through the world of man. The Day of Ragnarok, the Destiny of the Gods, the Twilight of the Gods, the Last Great Battle was approaching.

“Brothers slay brothers;  
Sisters' children  
Shed each other's blood.

Hard is the world;  
 Sensual sin grows huge.  
 There are sword-ages, axe-ages;  
 Shields are cleft in twain;  
 Storm-ages, murder-ages;  
 Till the world falls dead,  
 And men no longer spare  
 Or pity one another.”

NORSE MYTHOLOGY (R. B. ANDERSON)

## II: FIMBULVETER:

The Gods watched as Midgard grew more distant from their Life-Force. Crime became common place and good declined. The Gods realized that the prophecies handed down to them were coming true. The shadow of Ragnarok was rising and doom was marching on the nine worlds.

There will be an axe-age, when everything we know and hold dear will be hacked apart. This will be followed by a sword age in which every truth and all honor will be cut to pieces. Then a wind age will sweep over us, and all that was, will be swept away and what is left of us will be devoured during the final wolf age. Our world will be devastated. Everything will be laid to waste in three terrible wars. We will see our governments fall, our religions crumble, our traditional societies broken apart and the family structure will be destroyed, as fathers and sons, slaughter each other in generational conflicts. Nations, which should by right, consider themselves brothers, will be pitted against each other. Mothers will desert their families and turn on their menfolk, as they are seduced by the fever of the heart and mind, and turn to man-hatred. All moral fortitude will crumble and what was considered sacred will be aborted, and what was once thought of as abnormal and unnatural will be accepted as the norm.

The winter of winters will descend upon the world. Fimbulveter it will be called, and it will plunge everything into darkness. All light will be extinguished for three generations. Minds will be clouded by the darkness and hearts will freeze. The frost and biting winds will rule in the minds of men, and the light of the sun will not penetrate their hearts. All joy disappeared from the earth and the abominations of man grew more common with frightful acceleration. The last feelings of compassion and charity would disappear.

“Grim Fimbul raged, and o’er the world  
 Tempestuous winds and snowstorms hurled;  
 The roaring ocean icebergs ground,  
 And flung its frozen foam around,  
 E’en to the top of mountain height;  
     No warming air  
     Nor radiance fair  
 Of gentle Summer’s soft’ning light,  
 Tempered this dreadful glacial night.”  
 VALHALLA (J. C. JONES)

### III: THE WOLVES ARE UNLEASHED:

From the Ironwood, the brew of the hag Angrboda (Distress-bringer) will burst forth upon the world like werewolves. They will feed on the souls of the doomed mortals, splattering Asgard with their gore and drenching the stars in the heavens with their blood. The wolf, Skoll, will swallow the sun, and the moon will be mangled by Hati. The ordered universe will die and chaos will rage in place of order and light.

“In the east she was seated, that aged woman, in Jarnid,  
 And there she nourished the posterity of Fenrir;  
     He will be the most formidable of all, he  
 Who, under the form of a monster, will swallow up the moon.”  
 VOLUSPA

The earth will shutter, causing huge mountains to tumble into rubble. All that stood will now be in ruins. Thousands of years of progress will disappear. Trees will sway under the storms of cruel winds, and the bonds that held Fenrir will break, unleashing him upon the world. Eggther, the giants’ watchman, will call forth the legions of Jotunland, as he sings of the doom of the Gods while playing his harp upon his death mound. The dragon Nidhug gnaws through the roots of Yggdrasil, which shakes and trembles. The red cock, Fjalar will crow loudly, calling the giants to war. He will be answered by the golden combed cock, Gullinkambr of Valhalla, whose call wakens the legions of warriors in service of Odin. A third cock, Hel’s cock, rust red in color, will raise the dead of Hel by his cries.

The seas will gush with storm winds, waves crash over the land. The mighty Midgard Serpent, Jormungand, will waken. His endless coils twist and whirl with

his fury as he makes his way onto dry land. And sailing over the roaring waves comes the ship of the dead, Naglfar, made from the nails of dead men. At its helm rides the giant, Hymir and its decks are filled with the endless legions of giants. They are traveling to the battlefield of Vigrid.

## **VI: EVIL UNCHAINED:**

From far away, the earth shakes as Loki finally frees himself from his fetters that held him. He is now pure evil, and will set sail from the north, leading the ghastly host of Hel to do battle on the fields of Vigrid. Garm, the Hel-hound, breaks free from Gniphellir. His jaws are slobbering with the blood and gore of the millions of dead he has devoured, as he followed behind Loki. Jormungand will uncoil in ragging fury, striking out and causing worldwide destruction. His venom pours over the world, poisoning everyone's souls, staining everything with his foulness. Along side Jormungand, his brother, Fenrir will join him. He will break the chains that the Gods had bound him in. His jaws will stretch open so wide that the bottom jaw will scrape along the surface of the world, causing great fissions to form. His upper jaw will press against the infinite roof of heaven. His fury will rip apart the fabric of time and space. Fire will burn in his eyes and leap from his nostrils. His breath will feed the hatred that consumes the world.

## **V: THE ARMIES GATHER FOR BATTLE:**

Everywhere nothing remained standing. All that was, passed away under the fury of the giants' rampaging onslaught. Then out of Muspellheim, came tearing through the sky the flaming sons of Surtur. Surtur (The Black One) himself leads them with his blazing sword, like a sun-turned nova. They charged the Bifrost Bridge, burning everything before them. Across the bridge they lunged, but the bridge cracks and breaks apart under the heat and fiery force of their numbers. Unable to reach Asgard, they answer the call of Loki. To Vigrid they rallied and stood along side the Frost Giants of Jotunland and the legions of Hel, led by Hymir. There, under Loki's leadership, they waited for Odin and his armies to face them for the final showdown.

The forces of darkness raised their heads towards Asgard. They could hear the sound of Gjollhorn blaring across the nine worlds. Heimdall has left his hall, Himenbjorg (The Rocks of Heaven), and sounded the warning that doom is at hand. The Gods and Odin's legions of heroes rally to the All-Father for the final battle. Odin has returned from Mimir's Well for one last drink, to learn of things

to come. Odin sits upon Sleipnir and leads his armies from Asgard. Odin wears his golden, eagle helmet and carries his spear in hand. With him flew Munin and Huginn and along side run Freki and Geri. The Gods knew that they rode to their doom. They had permitted Loki to weaken them over the ages. Odin had only one eye and Tyr one hand. Frey was missing his sword and the handle of Thor's hammer was too short. Nevertheless, the Aesir did not show any hesitation. Odin knew that even if all died, they would rise again. His son Balder waited in the Netherworld for the rebirth of the Gods that would come.

The Yggdrasil shutters and its leaves fall from its branches. But two humans, a man and a woman, seek refuge within its trunk. They are guided by the will of Odin and are destined to survive the Last Great Battle.

## **VI: THE LAST GREAT BATTLE:**

The doors of Valhalla will open, five hundred and forty doors in total. The legions of Einherjar march out, eight hundred abreast from each door, shoulder to shoulder they marched in endless ranks. To Odin's call they answer. Wearing coats of mail and armor, carrying weapons and decked in helmets, they know that they will not return, but they do not care. Behind Odin and his legions they come. Up ahead rides Odin. Along side him, rides Thor in his chariot, pulled by his fateful goats. He swings his mighty hammer, Mjollnir, as he rides.

Upon the Fields of Vigrid the combatants assembled for the final conflict. Under Loki's command the forces of darkness, waited. Over one hundred and twenty square leagues the fields stretched, filled with the grim legions of Hel, Jotunland and Muspellheim. Towards them marched the armies of Asgard, Vanaheim, Alfheim and Valhalla. Like matter and anti-matter, fire and ice, the opposing forces let loose eons of pent-up antagonism and was about to explode in grim fighting and terrible destruction. With a colossal quake that resonated throughout the Cosmos, the roar of battle exploded upon the Fields of Vigrid.

Straight towards Fenrir Wolf and Jormungand rode Odin and Thor, leading the charge. Thor was unable to help his father for he needs all his strength to fight off the World Serpent. Worm and Thunderer exchange blows as Fenrir leaps at Odin. The two sons of Loki battle the All-Father and Defender of Man.

Frey and his elves now fight Surtur, the fire giant. The battle seems timeless, but eventually the Elf-King falls before the fire demon as he is struck down with Surtur's fiery sword. On this day, Frey regrets trading his sword for love.

The one-handed Tyr is confronted by the Hel-Hound, Garm. Like Odin and Fenrir, they battle. Fangs tears at divine flesh and the left-handed sword strikes

into fur and muscle. Eventually Garm's black heart is pierced by Tyr's sword, but if Tyr had not lost his right hand, he would have fought better and prevent Garm's jaws from clasp about his throat as he died. Tyr falls along with Garm.

Loki is met by Heimdall, the Guardian of Asgard. The White God, defender of the shining Life-Force of God and man fights the killer of Balder. Their battle is fierce and in the end the White God and the Fire Etin kill each other in battle.

Thor, the Son of Earth, rides straight at Jormungand. They had fought once before and they are a match for each other. The great coils whirl about the Thunderer, shaking the world under its weight and force. Thor's powerful hammer strikes and thunders as it crashes into the undulating endless of the worms body. Finally, Thor brings his hammer crashing down upon the head of Jormungand, crushing its skull and killing him. But before the worm dies, he spits one last breath of venomous poison upon Thor. As the Thunderer turns to help his father, he stumbles and falls. The venom of Jormungand claims its last victim.

Odin and Fenrir battle long and hard. The wolf's jaws bit and cut into Odin. Odin knows that he will die, he must if he is to be reborn anew. Finally, Fenrir brings his jaws down upon Odin, and swallows him whole. Chaos finally devours order in the end. But the wolf does not escape his fate. As soon as Odin disappears into the wolf's jaws, Odin's son, Vidar strides towards Fenrir to avenge his father. He places his foot, shoed in a boot made from the endless pieces of leather scrapes that all the shoemakers have sacrificed to Odin, on the lower jaw of the wolf. Vidar, the strongest, then grabs the upper jaws with one hand, holding it open so that Fenrir cannot close his fang upon him. Then with his other hand, he takes Odin's spear and lunges it deep into the throat of the wolf until it pierces its foul heart. Only strength, fortified by purity can destroy chaos.

## **VII: THE DEVOURING FIRESTORM:**

All the Gods, elves and heroes of Valhalla are doomed along with the giants and demons of Hel. The fires of Surtur rage across the Fields of Vigrid, consuming all and running wild and uncontrolled. From the field of the last battle the fires spread to the nine worlds. Asgard, Hel, Midgard and all the other realms disappear. Nothing escapes the flaming firestorm. Even Yggdrasill is charged black. Everything is once again united in ash and destruction. The great conflagration rages and claims the entire Cosmos. The sun dies and the stars fall from heaven. The flames race across the face of the earth, burning everything black until the earth itself sinks into the icy, primordial waters once more. Ragnarok has come. The universe seems to have come to an end. The Gods are no more and mankind



has disappeared. But Odin had foreseen this end and made plans to survive. The end is only the prelude to a new beginning. Winter is only a transition to a new Spring. The cycle of life turns and starts again. Evolution continues and the Gods will return to dwell in heaven and help mankind to rise again from the ashes of destruction. The world as we know it might die, but hope forever lives on.

Shrilly Shrieks the horn  
of Heimdall up the sky;  
Odin whispers  
with the head of Mimir;  
Yggdrasil wavers,  
The long-standing World Ash,  
the old tree judders  
and the giant is set free.  
What's up with the Aesir?  
What with the Elves?  
All Giantland is groaning,  
the Gods rush to the Thing;  
the dwellers in the crag  
the dwarfs are moaning  
by their doors of stone.  
What more will you divine?

From the east sweeps Hrymir  
with his shield shoved high;  
the serpent rolls  
into a giant's rage  
beating up the billows;  
while the bronze-beaked eagle  
screams slitting corpses;  
and Naglfar sets sail.

From the north a ship sails  
with the sons of Hel,  
drinking the spray  
Loki steers away:  
there row the race of monsters  
with all their men,

also in the boat  
is the brother of Byleistr.

From the south drives Surtr  
with the scourge of forests;  
the sun of the battle-Gods  
blazes from his sword;  
crag peaks crash as  
the kobolds scuttle;  
corpses tramp the hel-way  
and heaven cracks.

Then strikes Hlin  
Her second great sorrow  
when Odin fares  
to fight with the Wolf;  
and Beli's bright slayer  
to battle with Surtr:  
the loved one of Frigg  
is doomed to fall.  
Flies Odin's son  
to fight with the Wolf,  
Vidarr bores at  
the carrion beast:  
with the point of his sword  
he pierces the heart  
of the monster's son:  
his sire is avenged.

The glorious heir  
of Hlothyn goes  
valient to death  
by the venom of the Serpent;  
all men everywhere  
must abandon their hearths  
when Midgard's defender  
falls in exhaustion.

The sun grows dark,  
earth sinks under sea;  
from their steadings in heaven  
the bright stars turn;  
fire and reek burl  
upwards and break  
with hazy heat  
against heaven itself!

THE SPAEWIFE'S SONG (Brain Branston)

## VIII: THE MEANING OF RAGNAROK:

There are some who claim that the Norse story of the end of the Cosmos is actually a Christian manifestation. But this is not true. It is the case of putting the cart before the horse. As I have stated several times, the Christians incorporated a great deal from the old pagan religions of Europe into their dogma. Christianity was paganized. The story of Ragnarok is purely a Scandinavian tale, possibly Norwegian. There are several fundamental themes within the story. One is the destruction of the opposing forces in the universe. The final battle between the Gods and the giants can be likened to the concepts of matter and anti-matter. The two will cancel out each other when they come into contact. This is what happens to the Gods and giants in battle that takes place on the Fields of Vigrid. Another theme is the role men will play in the struggle of the Gods against the giants.

The death of Odin by Fenrir can be likened to the destruction of order by chaos. Odin is clearly the divine order. He represents order throughout the universe. Fenrir is a destructive force, representing chaos. The latter will devour the former, but the former will be avenged. Odin's son, Vidar is able to destroy Fenrir. His tool is a boot made from the millions of pieces of leather that shoemakers discard and sacrifice to the Gods to create just such a shoe. This can be thought of the need for mankind to work for the restoration of order, and defeat the triumph of chaos. We, as individuals, have a role in building the New Age of Gimli.

Men also play a role by dedicating their lives in service to the Gods. Those who do, will be taken by the Valkyries. They will be divided by Freyja and Odin. In the end, they will ride out with Odin from Valhalla and do battle with the giants. This concept of the Einherjar is an old Indo-European idea that existed in both the Celtic and Gothonic legends. The destruction of Odin by Fenrir (as well as the similar end of Tyr by Garm) is also an ancient legend that can be linked.

The very concept of death and resurrection existed long before the tale of Christ in both Indo-European beliefs as well as Middle Eastern beliefs. There is no need to explain this as an intrusion of Christian ideas into the Norse religion.

Ragnarok is often thought of as a Cosmic Fire. Surtur is a mysterious figure, for he seems to exist at the beginning of time. His name is translated as “black,” which is similar to the Hindu fire-god, Angi who is called black-backed. We can suppose that Surtur was created when the All-Father created the Cosmos in the beginning of time, and the flames that he unleashed, and which destroyed all nine worlds, including Muspellheim, caused his destruction. Cosmic Fire myths are not common, but Christians believe that when Jehovah destroys the world, he will do it by fire. Once again, this tale has been borrowed from both Middle Eastern and Indo-European religions that existed long before Christianity.

We have to understand that Ragnarok is upon us. The waning of the Gods has taken place. The Fires of Surtur is the great leveling forces in the world today, that seek to destroy all the evolutionary forces and bring all humanity down once more to the level of the mindless beasts. Every where we look, we can see the cultures and civilization that were created by the three-fold division of humanity by the evolutionary force that is Heimdal, being destroyed. The universalism, globalism and internationalism that is spreading across the world in the Twenty-first Century is burning down the great achievements of humanity just as surely as the Fires of Surtur leveled the nine worlds to ash. These fires are personified by Loki himself.

The rule of Christianity over the sons and daughters of Europe is the long darkness that the world was plunged into. The Gods still lived, but in different forms. They were weakened and their influence declined. The song of Loki has triumphed and today our civilization is in a rapid state of decay. It will soon collapse and then, upon its ruins, like the new earth rising out of the sea, a new age will rise. Today, many are returning to the old Gods. We can't resist their call. The Gods are dead, but they are waiting to be called back. Death is not an end, but a state of transition. They are asleep and waiting for Balder to rise from Hel, and through his resurrection, Odin and all the Gods and Goddesses will live once more. Just as Spring follows Winter, the Gods will once again return.

# 28

## *THE GOLDEN AGE OF GIMLI*

### **I: A NEW EARTH:**

After Ragnarok, there was only the still and eternal waters that engulfed everything. All evil had been swept away. But in time, a new earth rose from the timeless waters. The waters nourished and endowed new life to the surface of the new earth. Luscious woods and fertile plains covered the new world, bearing new fruit. Pleasant meadows and silver-ribbon rivers divided the lands. Purple mountains rose above the fruitful lands. Sparkling waters,, teaming with life surrounded the lands. The world was filled with life and blue skies glowed with the warming rays of a new sun, the daughter of the old. The earth did not need to be shielded from the warming rays of this new sun. The rays of the new sun were beneficial and helped to regenerate the new earth. A new moon also rose to light the night. There were no wolves chasing these spheres.

### **II: BALDER'S RETURN:**

Balder's resurrection from Hel was planned by Odin. The Son of Odin died so that the Gods might live again. He is the instrument for their rebirth. Balder represents the cyclical structure of nature. Just as the Gods created a Golden Age when first they created the universe, so a new Golden Age will be ushered in by the return of Balder from Hel. But, this new age will only become real once the Gods and Goddesses are reborn, and that cannot happen unless we, the children of the Gods, make a conscious effort to call them back.

The three runes of regeneration that Odin whispered into Balder's ear are Dagaz, Nauthiz and Ansuz. They are the secret for the rebirth of the Gods, and the magic spell Odin used to ensure that he and the Gods cheated Ragnarok and

return in the new age. Balder was his instrument and into Balder's ear did he speak the rune-spell.

Dagaz is the rune of day, or in this case, a new day. It represents light, polarity and synchronization. It is the union of two opposites, male and female that represents the two strips of the chromosome strands in the DNA chain. This rune is the dawning of a new day, and the birth of a new transcendent consciousness. It can manifest itself in a blinding flash of inspiration. Within it the individual is united with the cosmic forces of the universe represented as the Gods. Dagaz synthesizes opposites and makes them whole in a new union. This is the mysterious process of life and regeneration.

Nauthiz is the rune of necessity or the compulsion of fate. This rune represents the Norns and their destiny weaving powers. It is the rune of need and within it is the power to survive and thrive in difficult times. Nauthiz gives strength necessary to overcome the impossible. It provides the Folk with the urge to survive the present decay and decline of our world (Ragnarok). It is shaped like the bow-drill, which was used to ignite fire (inspiration). It drives the urge of growth and formation which is the biological process of birth and growth, which is the force of evolution. Within it is the process of friction and resistance, which drives the process of the progression of life. It is also the rune of growth of the folk.

Ansuz is the third rune. This is the rune of the Gods, and especially Odin. It has the power of transformation and inspiration. Being the rune of Odin, it unlocks the secrets of death, divine inspiration and wisdom. It is necessary to provide order and balance and to instill knowledge necessary for the folk to march into the future. It also represents the wisdom of the past and all that came before, which lies within our DNA or genes. The Ansuz rune provides inspired speech and hope for the future.

These three runes are the instrument of the rebirth of the Gods and the regeneration of our folk after Ragnarok. It represents the hope of the future. But it is up to us to decide if the Gods are to return.

One day Balder, who resided in the Netherworld, was woken from his sleep by his loving wife, Nanna. All the realm of Hel seem to come alive with an excitement that was unnatural for Hel's domain. All nine levels of the netherworld were aroused by news of a great caravan that was crossing the (river) and demanding entry into the gates that guard the netherworld.

"Why do you disturb me, dear wife?" Balder asked Nanna as he rose from his slumber.

“Because we have a messenger who beckons at our door,” Nanna said. “He won’t leave, nor will he come in our house. He said that he has been told to seek you out and requests your attendance.”

“Is he sent by Hel?” Balder asked.

“I think not,” Nanna said. “I do not recognize who he is, for his cloak is a golden light that hides his identity.”

Balder knew that this could only be of great importance. No messenger of Hel would be cloaked in such an aura. Balder rose and dressed and then went to greet their visitor. When he opened the door to his house, he saw standing in the doorway a figure encased in a light, pure and bright.

“What is your name, and who sent you?” Balder asked.

“I have been sent by one who flows and have been ordered to ask you one question,” the visitor said.

“Then ask your question,” Balder said.

“What did the All-Father say to his beloved son, Balder the Beautiful, when he laid on his funeral pyre?”

“Dagaz, Nauthiz and Ansuz are the charms for my resurrection,” Balder said.

As he spoke those words, the light that encased the visitor declined until Balder could make out the figure of Hermond standing before. His fair face was both sad and happy at once.

“Dear brother,” Hermond said. “It has been too long. I come as a herald and gift bearer for the All-Father, who even now rides at the head of a great procession of Gods and Goddesses on their way to this world. I was told to ask this question and give you these gifts.”

Hermond then presented Balder with a spear, Odin’s spear and with Odin’s arm ring, Daupnir.

Balder took the gifts from Hermond and his heart was both glad and sad, for he knew that Ragnarok had come and the Gods had met their doom. But he also knew that this meant that his time had come, and his and Nanna’s time in Hel’s realm had come to an end. It was time for his resurrection.

Throughout Hel word has passed rapidly that the time for Balder’s departure had arrived. Balder and Nanna were brought before Hel, who had prepared a great feast.

“These preparations are not for you, Balder,” she said in her mournful voice. “They were laid out as welcome for those who come with Odin to my realm. “I did not prepare a departure celebration for no one has ever left my domain, and I would not know how to say goodbye. The term is foreign to my lips and so you have my leave to go.”

With Balder and Nanna was Hermond, as they walked to the gates of Hel's domain. They found two, beautiful, white horses waiting for them. Their manes and hooves were gold and shined with a light that was warm and bright.

"Never have I see such lovely steeds," Nanna said as she caressed the horses lovingly.

"They are given to you by Odin himself, and their father is Sleipnir and their mother is Gold Mane. They are named Spiritflow and Fleshgrow. They will take you back to the world of the living and assist you in restoring order out of chaos."

"Come, my love," Balder said to his wife. "The cycle of life turns, and a new age waits to be born."

Balder and Nanna mounted their steed and road out of Hel. The way out was no longer guarded. The fierce hound, Garm, whose responsibility it was to keep the dead in Hel, had broken his chains and fled. Balder and his wife were free to leave. They passed over the bridge and crossed the river. The hooves of their steeds shined so bright as they raced away from the Netherworld that it blocked out all sight of the great host that had passed them on the road to Hel. So they did not see Odin leading the great procession of the Gods and Goddesses that rode to be welcomed by Hel's embrace, and remained there until the time when Balder had done what he was born to do—call back the Gods and Goddesses from the realm of the dead.

Balder found the nine worlds in a state of chaos. The fires of Muspellheim had laid low and leveled all things, until it was impossible to distinguish one thing from another. The God of Regeneration knew that he had to undo the great leveling that Surtur had inflicted upon the Cosmos. Balder is the sun-rising and thus the great regenerative Life-Force. His resurrection from the Netherworld caused the Life-Force to renew itself, and fill the Cosmos once more.

Balder stood and watched and then raised his hand and a new sun was born. Nanna smiled as the warm, golden rays gently bathed her face. She too raised her hand and a new earth rose out of the waters of chaos. It was green and fruitful, with endless forests and pleasant meadows and golden fields. Clear, fresh rivers criss-crossed the landscape and emptied into the new blue oceans that surrounded the lands.

Standing on Idavoll's Plains, where Asgard once stood, Balder heard a voice.

"Brother. Is that you?"

When Balder turned around, he saw his brother, Hodur, standing on the fields. He had followed Balder out of Hel, but he still could not see. Balder walked up to his brother and placed his hands over his eyes and smiled, bathing his brother in his golden rays.



“You are blind no more, dear Hodur,” Balder said. “From this day forth, you will no longer be plagued by the darkness that has clouded your mind.”

When he removed his hands from Hodur’s face, his once-blind brother opened his eyes and glazed upon the face of Balder the Beautiful. The light that shined from his face caused Hodur to lose control and he burst into tears for the treachery that he had committed against his brother. He collapsed in grief and joy before Balder. Balder held his hands and spoke to his brother.

“Let the past die with this new age,” Balder said. “Now that you can look upon the truth, and never again will the treachery of the lying tongue lead you to commit fratricide. We are united by blood and our blood will prove to be a bond stronger than the strongest chains.”

### **III: BALDER RESTORES LIFE TO THE NEW AGE:**

See that the new world was devoid of life, Balder stood with his brother, and just as he restored his brother’s sight, Balder raised his hands and the new universe was filled with the life-giving essence.

The waters gave nourishment to the lands and endowed the surface of the new earth with new life. Luscious green woods grew, where there was only barren ground. Fertile plains were grown over with lush green grass and multi-colored flowers. Trees presented the world with new fruit. Pleasant meadows and silver-ribbon rivers divided the lands. Great mountains covered with snow rose above the fruitful lands. And through all the lands, animals, birds and all forms of life filled with world. Deep blue waters teeming with life, surrounded the lands, forming new oceans. Even the blue skies glowed with the warming rays of a new sun, the daughter of the old. A new moon also rose to light the night. There were no wolves chasing these spheres in the new age.

Hodur looked at what his brother had done and smiled. “You have done well, brother,” Hodur said. “I was never able to look upon the old age, but with the sight that you have given me, I swear that ignorance and foolishness will not be known in this age.”

Balder was pleased with his brother’s approval. “With you at my side, men will know what they were blinded to in the last age,” Balder said. “There will be no place for blind-ignorance in the New Age of Gimli. Men will know the truth that they will need to ensure their progress and survival. And we will show them the way.”

“Yes, but we will not do it alone,” Hodur said.

## IV: BALDER AND HODUR ARE JOINED BY OTHER GODS:

All the Gods and Goddesses of the Aesir and Vanir were dead. They represented the germinating forces of nature. They died in the Last great Battle on the Fields of Vigrid, but on the Fields of Idavoll, where Asgard stood before the destruction, those who survived the destruction gathered on the Fields of Idavoll.

Most important, came Balder the Beautiful from the world of the dead. As planned by Odin, Balder's shining light will return to the universe. He was accompanied by his loving wife, Nanna. She will become the new mother of the heavens and take her place along side her husband as a reward for her undying faithfulness. Also accompanying Balder is his brother, Hodur. But with the return of Balder's light to the universe, Hodur is no longer blind and completely rehabilitated. Blind ignorance has disappeared and Balder and his brother will rule together. The ying and the yang are now one. Conflict has been replaced by peace and unity.

On Idavoll they were met by the sons of Thor; Modi and Magni. Thor's two sons represent strength and energy. And Balder greeted Modi. "You, Modi, the Angry One, personify the determination by which the Children of the Gods will find the will to overcome that which threatens its existence. With your brother, Magni, the Strong One, you will bestow upon the Children of the Gods the strength to build a new and better world. It is to you that I assign the task of guarding your father's hammer until the time when he takes his place in our hall once more. Keep the hammer well, for with it the forces of destruction will be kept in place. With your combined powers of will and strength will we find the power to rule." They came carrying their father's hammer, Mjollnir, which represents the regenerative force of nature.

Up came striding, the long-legged Hoenir, both tall and fair. He was no longer dead, and had become whole once more. With him was the Wand of the Vanir and the power to foretell what is to come, and containing their regenerative power. "Welcome, Hoenir," Balder said. "Your long strives will ensure the great progress in the reshaping of the world. Within in you burns the combined essence of the Aesir and the Vanir. You carry the wand (spear) of Odin. Keep it well until my father returns and takes his place in his hall once more."

Then Balder saw the mighty Vidar standing on the grass of Idavoll. "I see the mighty Vidar, the Avenger of Odin," Balder said. "No I know that justice will rule over the new age that we are giving birth to. Chaos and destruction are no

match for Vidar's strength. With him by our side, we can be sure that order and peace will be safe from the savage jaws of the wolf."

Next Balder met Vali and he welcomed him most of all. "Dear, Vali, who was born to avenge the wrongs done to me," Balder said. "Only one day old you were and still you could see through the blindness of ignorance. Your new-born innocence, that is instinctual in the unsoiled, you were able to see through the darkness of ignorance. With you by our side, the new age will be one of enlightenment and truth. Never again will we suffer from blind ignorance. Through you, my spirit was able to eventually triumph over the ignorance that had befallen the universe." And then Balder turned to his brother, Hodur. "See for yourself, Vali, the work you have done. By your slaying of blind ignorance, you have given sight to the blind."

Hodur stepped forth and greeted Vali, and they clasped hands as brothers. Vidar and Vali, the two avengers, represent the imperishable forces of nature

## **V: THE GODS REBUILD THE WORLD:**

Once Balder and Hodur had joined the others on the Fields of Idavoll, they all sat down and began talking amongst themselves about what happened before Ragnarok. The untouched and pure grass that blew in the winds that gently swept across the Fields of Idavoll was the ground upon which Balder began to piece together the new age. Everything was discussed and nothing was left out. They had decided that the past was dead and no bitterness from before Ragnarok should be permitted to survive to spoil the new age. The memory of the Gods and Goddesses who had died saddened them for they missed their comrades and friends. Then, one day, as they walked through the tall grass of Idavoll, they came upon a golden chessboard and chess pieces. They began playing with them and soon a new domain began to arise. Clearly, the chess set represents the plans of some kind—a blueprint for a new dawn. The Gods took the pieces and board and began playing the game over and over until they had mastered it, causing the game to reveal all its moves. And now Balder and the other Gods and Goddesses understood that the secret of the game was the blueprint for a new age.

The Golden chess-set revealed how the new age was to be ordered, and it revealed that the foundation of that new order laid within the three rules Dagaz, Nauthiz and Ansuz (DNA). So Balder sought and found that hidden in the trunk of the Yggdrasil (the Life-Force), or the Hoddmimir (the treasure wood), the gene pool of the race of man, the Children of the Gods, had survived. It is within the DNA that Odin had bestowed upon us the greatest of his gifts, and that is his

essence. From this Balder fashioned two humans; Líf, a man and Lífthrasir, a woman. From these pure children a new race of man would rise—the Vol-sung—a race that will truly be Godlike.

Balder orders the Gods to build the Hall of Gimli. It is a hall so fair, that it outshines the sun and has a roof of gold. The Gods will live in Gimli in peace and wait for the old Gods to return to join them.

Balder also creates a new Hall for the new Children of the Gods—The Hall of Brimir. Within Brimir, there will also be peace and order and the Children of the Gods will never be in need of food, drink and everything else that will be needed to live. The floor of this hall will always be warm to the touch, and in this hall, men will always be close to the Gods.

Balder also builds the Hall of Sindri, near the dark mountain of Nidafjöll. This Hall has a roof made of red gold, which represents the blood or DNA. Men of good hearts and mind will dwell here and they will guard the treasure that Odin bestowed upon them—their DNA. It is important to understand why this hall is given the name—Sindri—by Balder. Sindri was the dwarf that created the ring, Draupnir the reproductive agent that gives renewal to the Folk (Odin). Sindri also created Thor's hammer, Mjöllnir, the instrument of protection and well being of the Folk (Thor). And Sindri also created the ship, Skidbladnir, by which we are carried to heaven (Frey).

And Balder tells the new Children of the Gods to keep well both halls, for they are needed for the future well being of the Folk. The union of these two halls will ensure that their bond with the Gods will be maintained. But only those who have returned to the Gods will live within Brimir and Sindri, and the rest will be assigned to suffer in a new hall, designated for those who have no honor, who have worked to destroy their own kind, and for those who have turned away will suffer within the realm of Nastrond, on the shore of corpses. Within this hall all doors face north and look into the darkness that is existence without the Gods. The roof of this hall is made of living snakes. Their heads face inward, and from their fangs, poisonous venom pours down on the inhabitants, forming rivers of suffering. Also within Nastrond will dwell the dragon, Nadhogg, who survives Ragnarok. He will suck the blood from those who dwell within Nastrond. Their blood will be poisoned by the venom and they will be devoured by the destruction and chaos that is Nadhogg.

The meaning of this is clear to those who will see. We are not talking about the afterlife, but this life. Those who will seek out the Gods and live in their celebration will find that Gimli is the hope of a better life on earth. Gimli is not only

the promise of residing with the Gods in eternity, but it is a better world that we can create for our folk here on in this world.

Nastrond is not to be represented as some kind of Hell, but it is the meaningless life that people who chose to live a life without the Gods. By this we mean, that they have not returned to their folk, and the life they will lead will be wrecked and morally improvised. Nidhogg is existence outside the folk, or folk community (The union of the Gods and our folk). This meaningless, rootless existence will destroy their blood, genetic essence, or Life-Force just as Nastrond will suck the blood out of them, leaving them dead inside-soulless.

## VI: A NEW RACE OF MAN:

Two humans, a man, Lif (Life), and a woman, Lifthrasir (Desiring Life), survived the destruction of Ragnarok. They were hidden away by Odin in the trunk of Yggdrasill (Hoddmimir's Wood). The charred trunk of the great ash protected them from the fires of Surtur. They now came forth and began to repopulate the world. The World Tree sprang to life anew, and its leaves and branches protected food and shelter for the new race of man. Its dew satisfied their thirst. Lif and Lifthrasir now had children and their children bore children until the entire world was repopulated, but they did not divide into many nations. The children of the race of man lived as one people, a new and better race filled with the Life-Force (Odinnic) of the Gods. The children of the Gods will mingle with the new race of the Aesir, in the new Age of Gimli.

If the Gods are to return, then it is up to the man to make a conscious effort to call them back. This can be done by the decisions we make in the years to come. Will we work to create a new Gimli on earth, where the Children of the Gods live in celebration of the Gods? We will create a new life where we strive to enhance our purity of body and spirit so that the Gods might return and influence the affairs of man once more? Shall we work to build new tribes that will survive the coming collapse, so that new communities will weather the storm? If the Gods dwell within us, then it is our sacred duty to ensure that we maintain the highest ethically standards, both physically and spiritually so that we will become the instruments of their rebirth. If we decide that all these goals are worthy of our efforts, then we will be doing the work of Balder and ensure that the Gods will return, and leading them once more will be Odin, reborn anew.

“Back from the infinite he will return,  
He, who is greater and wiser than all.

But few today will see the future further,  
when Odin will return onto his hall.”

(Robert Blumetti)

## VII: BALDER'S RESURRECTION:

Balder's resurrection from Hel was planned by Odin. The Son of Odin died so that the Gods might live again. He is the instrument for their rebirth. Balder represents the cyclical structure of nature. Just as the Gods created a Golden Age, when first they created the universe, so a new Golden Age will be ushered in by the return of Balder from Hel. But, this one age will only become real once the Gods and Goddesses are reborn, and that cannot happen unless we, the children of the Gods, make a conscious effort to call them back.

The three runes of regeneration that Odin whispered into Balder's ear are Dagaz, Nauthiz and Ansuz. They are the secret for the rebirth of the Gods, and the magic spell Odin used to ensure that he and the Gods cheat Ragnarok and return in the new age. Balder was his instrument and into Balder's ear did he speak the rune-spell.

Dagaz is the rune of day, or in this case, a new day. It represents light, polarity and synchronization. It is the union of two opposites, male and female that represents the two strips of the chromosome strands in the DNA chain. This rune is the dawning of a new day, and the birth of a new transcendent consciousness. It can manifest itself in a blinding flash of inspiration. Within it, the individual is united with the cosmic forces of the universe represented as the Gods. Dagaz synthesizes opposites and makes them whole in a new union. This is the mysterious process of life and regeneration.

Nauthiz is the rune of necessity or the compulsion of fate. This rune represents the Norns and their destiny weaving powers. It is the rune of need and within it, is the power to survive and thrive in difficult times. Nauthiz gives strength necessary to overcome the impossible. It provides the Folk with the urge to survive the present decay and decline of our world (Ragnarok). It is shaped like the bow-drill, which was used to ignite fire (inspiration). It drives the urge of growth and formation which is the biological process of birth and growth, which is the force of evolution. Within it is the process of friction and resistance, which drives the process of the progression of life. It is also the rune of growth of the folk.

Ansuz is the third rune. This is the rune of the Gods, and especially Odin. It has the power of transformation and inspiration. Being the rune of Odin, it

unlocks the secrets of death, divine inspiration and wisdom. It is necessary to provide order and balance and to instill knowledge necessary for the folk to march into the future. It also represents the wisdom of the past and all that came before, which lies within our DNA or genes. The Ansuz rune gives inspired speech and hope for the future.

These three runes are the instrument of the rebirth of the Gods and the regeneration of our folk after Ragnarok. It represents the hope of the future. But it is up to us to decide if the Gods are to return

# 29

## *THE VOLSUNG: THE GOD-MEN OF THE FUTURE*

### **I: THE VOLSUNG RACE:**

The king of the most ancient Aryans was known as Volsung. He could trace his ancestry back to Odin. Long ago, Odin decided that he wanted to breed a superior race of humans, and so he slept with a virgin Jarl woman who gave birth to a son that she named Volsung. He was a mighty hero and the most courageous in the line of kings that ruled over the Aryans. Because of his bravery, he was under the protection of Odin. Volsung had many children, and first among them were a pair of twins: a boy by the name of Sigmund and a girl by the name of Signy. After they were born, Volsung had nine other sons. Signy was betrothed to King Siggeir of Gautland, as a young girl. When she became of age they had a great wedding, but the wedding was disturbed by the appearance of an old man with one eye, and wearing a hooded cloak. He stroll into the hall, carrying a staff. He walked up to a great tree that grew in the center of the hall, and held up the roof. There, he pulled out a sword from under his cloak and plunged it into the trunk of the tree. He turned to the assembly and told them; "Whoever can remove the sword from the tree, can keep it as a gift, and he will discover that it is the most powerful weapon in the world."

One by one, each man stepped forward and tried to pull the sword from the tree, but all failed, except for Sigmund. Siggeir offered Sigmund three times the sword's weight in gold, if he would give it to him, but Sigmund refused and told Siggeir: "It was not meant for you. If it had been, Fate would have given you the strength to pull it from the tree. The sword belongs to me and no one else." From that moment on, Siggeir grew to hate his brother-in-law.

Siggeir invited all the Volsung to come to Gautland nine months after the wedding. After they had arrived, he planned to ambush them and kill their entire tribe. Signy, his wife and the queen, learned of her husband's treachery and



warned her father. But Volsung would not flee and was killed by Siggeir's soldiers. All of his sons were taken captive, but rather than kill them, Siggeir set them in stocks. They were left in the forest to die. Every night, a she-wolf arrived and killed and devoured one of the brothers. Finally, Sigmund was the last one still alive. Signy decided to save her brother and she smeared his face with honey. When the she-wolf came for him, she greedily began licking it off his face. While she did, Sigmund was able to grab the wolf's tongue between his teeth. The wolf struggled to get free, and in doing so, she broke Sigmund's stocks. Sigmund was able to kill the wolf, and afterwards, he took refuge in the forest.

For nine years, he lived in exile in the forest with the help of his sister. In that time Signy gave birth to two sons by her husband, Siggeir. She decided to send them into the forest to be tested by her brother. They both failed, and Signy told her brother to kill them, for they proved to be weak and inferior and did not measure up to the true line of the Volsung. Realizing that no son she could possibly bear by her husband would ever be strong enough to avenge the death of her father and brothers, she approached a seithrkonnur for help. The seithrkonnur agreed to change shapes with her, so that she might sleep with her own brother, Sigmund, and produce a son, of the pure line of the Volsung, and strong enough to avenge her family.

The deed was done, and in time, Signy secretly produced a son by her twin brother, and named him Sinfjotli. He was the epitome of a true Volsung. When he turned ten years old, she sent him into the forest to be tested by Sigmund. Sinfjotli did not fail the test and he amazed Sigmund by his willingness to avenge the death of his grandfather and uncles, by killing his supposed "father" Siggeir.

Sigmund and Sinfjotli worked together to break into Siggeir's hall and hid in wait for him. Only Signy knew that they were waiting for her husband. She had two additional sons with Siggeir and they happened to discover the two men in armor, hiding. They ran back to warn their father of the danger, but Signy seized them and dragged them back to Sigmund and Sinfjotli. "My children have betrayed you," she told her brother and son. "They can't be trusted and you must kill them." Sigmund refused, but Sinfjotli did not hesitate to kill both of the boys.

But the death of the boys did not stop Sigmund and Sinfjotli from being discovered, and a huge battle broke out in the hall. Despite the courage of both Sigmund and Sinfjotli, they were eventually captured, but Signy was able to help them escape. Instead of fleeing back to the forest, they returned to Siggeir's hall and set it on fire. When Siggeir woke and asked who had caused the fire, Sigmund appeared. "It was I who set the fire to your house," he admitted. "And I

was helped by Sinjfolli, my sister's son. We wanted to let you know that you have not succeeded in exterminating the entire race known as the Volsung."

Sigmund begged his sister to leave the alien tribe of Siggeir and return to live among her own kind, but she refused. "I have betrayed my kind by marrying with Siggeir's tribe, the enemy of my own race. I have given birth to alien sons, who have failed to measure up to the name of Volsung. I have not forgotten my father and his kind. I have killed the mixed brew that I have spawned, so I am willing to die with Siggeir and his kind, just as unwillingly as I married him. She then kissed her brother and son farewell and walked into the consuming flames.

## **II: SIEGFRIED, SON OF SIGMUND:**

Sigmund returned to his father's kingdom. He lived a long and adventurous life, fighting many battles and winning much glory. He eventually died in battle, face-to-face with Odin. His sword, which never failed him, was shattered, when it hit Odin's spear. He had married the beautiful Hjordis, who was bearing him a child. She took the pieces of the sword and hid them, knowing that the child she was carrying would have need of it in the future to defend the honor of the Volsung.

Hjordis gave birth to a fine son, who grew into a hero. He was called Siegfried by some and Sigurd by others. He was a favorite of Odin's, just like his father. When his own father died, he was raised by the dwarf servant, Regin. Regin was an ingenious blacksmith and master of magic and had come to live among the Volsung, promising to use his skills to help them. He soon won a position of favor among Sigmund's family, and Hjordis trusted him to permit him to raise her son, Siegfried. Regin was true to his word and used his skills to reforge Sigmund's sword. But Regin had told the Volsung about his own family. His brother, Fafnir, was a great magician who had acquired a great hoard of gold and treasure through his own skills. He had turned himself into a dragon to protect his treasure. Regin hoped to steal the great treasure that was guarded by his brother-turned-dragon, Fafnir, and convinced Siegfried to kill the dragon in the name of glory and adventure. The murderous, gold-loving Regin did not tell Siegfried that the dragon was actually his own brother.

Siegfried, like all Volsung, was unafraid and planned to kill the dragon when he came out of his cave. He first dug a trench across the path that he knew Fafnir always traveled, everyday, down to the river for a drink of water.. He jumped into the trench, and covered himself with branches. When Fafnir passed over the trench, Siegfried raised his sword and plunged it deep into Fafnir's breast, pierc-

ing his heart and killing him. But before Fafnir died, he warned Siegfried that the gold he was guarding was cursed and would bring death and destruction to whomever owned it. Siegfried was unafraid, and laughed and said that even the bravest must have wealth. Regin, who had been lying in wait, rushed out and drank Fafnir's blood. He then asked Siegfried to roast Fafnir's heart. Regin then took some of the gold and used it to make himself a ring of power, which he would use to rule the world. Siegfried did as Regin asked, and his fingers happen to touch the bloody juices of the heart, as it cooked. When Siegfried licked the bloody juices from his fingers, he discovered that he suddenly could understand the animals and birds in the forest. Some of the birds in the tree overhead warned him not to trust Regin. They told him that Regin had plans to kill him and take Fafnir's gold for himself. Siegfried wasted no time and immediately cut off the dwarf's head, and took the gold, including Regin's ring, for himself.

Siegfried decided to set out on his own. With the wealth that he now owned, he could set-up his own kingdom, so he left with the gold. He soon came upon a mountain top surrounded by fire. Within the circle of fire was a sleeping Valkyrie. Being pure of heart, he had never seen such a beautiful woman before. Because he was unafraid, he was able to pass through the flames and awaken the sleeping Valkyrie with a kiss, whose name was Brynhilde. They soon fell in love and swore that they would marry one another—for she had vowed to marry only the bravest of heroes. Siegfried gave her Regin's golden ring as a token of his love and promised to marry her. They agreed to establish their own Volsung kingdom, but she discovered she was pregnant with his son and could not travel. So Siegfried departed, promising to return for her. Brynhilde waited for Siegfried's return.

Siegfried traveled far and eventually came to the land of Hundings. There he met a king with two sons, Gunnar and Hogn. He also had a step-son, Guttorm, and one daughter, Gundrun. The mother of the four siblings was named, Grimhilde. She was an expert in magic and learned her craft from the dwarfs, Regin and Fafnir long ago. In return for them teaching her their magic, she agreed to sleep with them. In time, she gave birth to their son, Guttrom. She taught her first born, half-dwarf son, Guttromson, her magic craft. When Siegfried told Guttrom of his adventures, how he had killed Regin, of his love for Brynhilde, the gold ring he gave her, and his magnificent hoard of gold that he took after killing Fafnir, Guttrom grew to hate Siegfried. Guttrom wanted Siegfried's huge hoard of gold for his own, because it belonged to Fafnir, who was one of the two dwarfs that might be his father. Guttrom now conspired to kill Siegfried. He came up with a plan, and used his magic to cause Siegfried to forget Brynhilde

and fall in love with his half-sister, Gudrun. Siegfried and Gudrun were soon married, and he swore friendship to Gunnar and Hogni, but not to Guttrom.

Guttrom then told Gunnar of Brynhilde and he went looking for her. Eventually he discovered the ring of fire that surrounded Brynhilde, exactly where his half-brother told him it was. He fell in love with Brynhilde, but he could not penetrate the fire. Realizing that his brother-in-law was fearless, he asked to change shapes with him and cross the ring of fire. Siegfried agreed, and Guttrom transformed Siegfried and Gunnar into each other. As Gunnar, Siegfried was able to pass through the ring of fire and claimed Brynhilde for Gunnar. Not realizing that it was really Siegfried, Brynhilde, believing that Siegfried abandoned her, she accepted Gunnar's declaration of love. She was bound by her own oath to wed a hero brave enough to pass through the ring of fire. Siegfried refused to make love to Brynhilde and they slept with his word between them. When they had returned to Burgundy, Gunnar took Siegfried's place and wed Brynhilde. When she learned that Siegfried no longer remembered her and had wed Gudrun, she gave Gunnar the ring that Siegfried gave her. Gunnar gave the ring, as a token, to his sister, Gudrun. With the ring in her possession, Gudrun learned everything that had passed between Siegfried and Brynhilde before Siegfried had lost his memory.

One day, Gudrun had quarreled with Brynhilde. She began mocking her, accusing her of belonging to two men. As proof, she showed Brynhilde the ring given to her by Gunnar, and explained to Brynhilde how she and Siegfried had both been tricked. Brynhilde grew furious and swore to seek her vengeance. She accused Gunnar of cowardice and revealed to Siegfried the truth. The memory of what had happened, returned to Siegfried. He was ashamed and appalled of his own treachery, and offered to go away with Brynhilde, but she refused him. To get her revenge on Gunnar, she told him that she had made love to Siegfried when he was disguised as Gunnar.

Gunnar was furious and wanted revenge on Siegfried. He asked his brother, Guttrom, who had not sworn friendship with Siegfried, to kill him on his behalf. Guttrom agreed and stabbed Siegfried while he slept. He pulled his knife out of Siegfried and licked his blood from it and thought to himself that it was sweeter than wine. But Siegfried had not instantly died, and woke from the pain. He saw Guttrom trying to sneak out of his room and struck with his sword, cutting him in half at the waist. But Siegfried's was mortally wounded and was dying. He protested with his dying breath that he had not betrayed Gunnar.

Gudrun wept for Siegfried, but Brynhilde laughed and told her husband, Gunnar: "You and your clan will suffer the same evil that you have inflicted upon

Siegfried and me. You have broken your oath with Siegfried and thus you and your kin are doomed.” She foretold them that Hogni would die, and Gudrun would suffer to live a long, but sorrowful life. She then instructed them to build a great pyre for Siegfried. She told them to kill four of his menservants and eleven of her own waiting women, as well as Siegfried’s horse, and place them on the pyre with Siegfried. As the fires were lit and began to burn, Brynhilde jumped onto the fire to die with her beloved Siegfried.

The gold that Siegfried had won from Fafnir passed to Gunnar and Hogni, but it only brought them a terrible doom. Siegfried’s daughter by Gudrun died a cruel death, but the son he fathered with Brynhilde, lived on and had many children. They eventually grew into a mighty race and continued the line of the Volsung.

### III: THE MEANING OF THE VOLSUNG:

One of the central truths to the story of the Volsung is the danger that the Desire Nature, or more commonly referred to as the sex drive and its wants and likes, have on the development of the Folk. This Desire Nature is both an individual, as well as a collective force. It stems from the Universal Desire, or the urge to reproduce, but it is more than just reproduction—it is evolution. The upward development of the species. The Universal Desire is manifested in the particular of individual urges.

This Universal Urge to reproduce (the sexual desire), and upward progression (evolution) is represented in the myths about the Gods and Goddesses, but one of the most potent manifestations of this urge is the dragon. Our ancestors believed there were dragons in the earth. Like the giants that lived within the earth, and who were uncontrolled forces that can cause havoc and chaos, the Dragons, when uncontrolled, could be very dangerous. This is represented by Jormungand, the world servant. He is the sex drive which “makes the world go round.” It is the higher figure of the hero, pure and righteous, who must slay the dragon—as did St. George or Siegfried. This is allegory for the lesson that our uncontrolled sexual desire, the Desire Nature, (both universal and individual) must be conquered and used for productive purposes (evolution). This is the central mystery and foundation of all Western philosophy, religious and occult, and of the Folk Faith.

Once the dragon has been slain, it must be transformed from something dark and destructive into something light and productive. When this is achieved, and

it can be done on many different levels, the result is joy, peace of mind, well being, happiness, order and eternity, absolute indestructibility, and progression.

The dragon can change its shape. It may take on many guises to achieve its ends. Its goal is the total domination over the individual, and through this, it seeks to seed the physical world with ideas that can be very destructive. The question before us is whether this Desire Nature or the sexual urge, will be productive or destructive? This can be achieved through the use of Seithr magic. The practitioner of Seithr, a seithrkonnur, learned to use the dragon force in its lower or more basic form (not to be interpreted in a pejorative sense). They were supposed to gain the power to fly through the air, kill one's enemy at a distance, look into the future, raise storms, and other manifestations that we, today, contribute to witchcraft. Seithr is the harnessing of the sexual energy. Sex seemed to have played a major role in the craft of the seithrkonnur. Seithr was mainly practiced, though not exclusively, by women, while galder magic was exclusively practiced by men. Galder included the use of song, dance, geometric representation (runes) for the purpose of directing the will through a one-point concentration, in order to achieve one's goals. Breathing exercises and some form of yoga were also part of galder magic. It was used to cultivate fearlessness, physical prowess in battle, self-control and discipline, imperviousness to pain, endurance under the most trying and difficult conditions, and a strict code of honor and loyalty toward fulfilling oaths that are made. The purpose in the male-dominated galdercraft was to control and direct the dragon, rather than to immerse oneself in its force as is done in the practice of seithr. The tales concerning Odin, and especially Balder, are central to the practice of galder magic. The lessons that are conveyed, is that the Gods are not only all-knowing, but also hidden. He is a wanderer, with no fixed abode. He is the master of hidden knowledge and has developed a superior will. His entire life is directed toward one end, and everything else is unimportant. He is not controlled by his possessions, but sees them as simple tools to be used to further his goal. He is the superman as expressed by both Shaw and Nietzsche. His desire is to raise man to a higher form of existence. He uses his hidden knowledge (both scientific and spiritual) to transform man into a superior form of human. Like the roots of the tree, his feet are squarely planted in the ground, but he is constantly stretching and reaching for the heavens.

In the story, Volsung weds his daughter, Signy, to a lesser form of human, Siggeir. Siggeir is jealous of the Volsung when Odin bestows his swords as a gift to Sigmund. He plans the death of the Volsung tribe. King Volsung and all his sons, with the exception of Sigmund, are killed as a punishment for desecrating the heritage given to them by Odin. It is important to understand that it was

Odin who set the process in motion for Siggeir to kill Volsung and his sons by placing the sword in the trunk of the tree.

Signy remains loyal to her own kind, she tried to warn her father and brothers, but they cannot escape the fate that is in store for them. But Signy, does save her twin brother, and together they seek to destroy Siggeir and his tribes by stealth. They must hideout and wait for their time to strike. They destroy all lesser types produced by Signy (her sons with Siggeir), but soon she is able to give birth to a son with her own kind (Sigmund). Eventually, the decadent House of Sieggeir is burnt to the ground, and the Volsung are able to rebuild their own nation once more. This is a very important tale for our people living in the present Winter of Ragnarok—Fimbulveter.

We can see that the Volsung saga is the tale of a superior breed of humanity that is produced by Odin. He conveys some of his own essence into this new breed of man. Thus, this superior breed has a strong bond with the Gods, and they are more intune with the Life-Force or essence of the Gods. But this new form of man is persecuted by the Hundings, a more earth-bound breed of mankind that is base and lower. It hates the Volsung and seeks to pull them down to its level.

The Volsung are guided by Odin. He seeks to help them evolve into an higher form of life, the Siegfried Race. But the Volsung is plagued by interference from the hostile forces of the dwarfish creatures that seek to dominate the world through the use of wealth and material enslavement. Siegfried is raised by such a dwarf, because he must learn something of his craft if he is to reforge his father's sword, the weapon that he must use in the material world. This is his struggle to master the sexual desire. The sword is the wisdom (scientific and spiritual, which are gifts from Odin to be used in the service of the Folk) conveyed by Odin. Once the dragon (the sexual urge) is slayed (controlled) and cooked (transformed), the hero drinks of it and is enlightened by it. The drinking of the dragon's blood or essence confers an understanding of the language of the birds or animals (this is a form of enlightenment—the understanding of the natural world). This leads him to find his true love partner, Brynhilde. Their union is the union of galder and seithr magic.

Siegfried must reforge his father's sword, which is the symbol of the race will, emanating from Odin through the generations. This weapon is used by Siegfried, the pure hero, to slay Fafnir, the dragon. He masters his base urges and thus achieves a higher understanding of Nature. He achieves domination and control of it. This permits him to rid himself of the dwarf influence (whose assistance to him was actually destructive because the dwarf was acting in his own interests).

Siegfried goes on to discover his spirit wife. Their union endows him with new knowledge and understanding (she initiates him into the greater mysteries). In the end, they are destroyed by the treachery of the Hundings (lower humanity), which is the only way to destroy true physical and spiritual nobility. But by remaining true, the line of the Volsung will continue in the end.

For Siegfried to achieve a higher state of spirituality, he must first be tested through deeds. He relies on those qualities that were bestowed upon him by Odin, through his lineage (DNA). He has to constantly reforge himself into a force that will help him to free himself from the existence of mediocrity and impotence—desire. He learns of the desire, and learns to understand the baser forces or urges of Nature, but he remains spiritually and physically pure. Only in this way, can he find his spiritual wife. It is very important for Siegfried to remain spiritually pure. If he identifies with Desire, he will fail. Only after he was tricked into being seduced by another woman (representing worldliness) by Guttrom, does he fall. This leads to the beginning of the end. It is important to understand that if one betrays one's spirit wife, it will lead to death.

It is important to understand that Siegfried's dependence on assistance from the dwarf to defeat the dragon, Fafnir, is necessary because it sometimes "take fire to fight fire." The dwarf represents the material world and so, sometimes it takes a dwarf to help defeat the dragon, as well as the weapon of one's ancestors. But to use the dwarf by itself, without the use of the sword, will result in one's doom. The sword is one's inherited gift—one's essence. It is through the use of one's sword, that one can achieve an understanding of our True Will (what we truly are and our purpose and place in this world) in the material world. This is our gift inherited from our fathers. It is our sword and we must rely on it, reforge it, hone it and use it—the one-point concentration of the True Will. To confront the dragon without it, will make us slaves to the dwarf, and eventually we will be destroyed by him.

We should rely on our Runic meditation—a practice of controlled breathing and meditation—to help develop and refine our True Will and focus our entire being toward one end. This is not easy, but if it was, it would not take a hero (superman) to do it. It requires a great deal of time and dedication in the use of Runic mediation. It can be done individually, but it should also be done as a group. Both processes are necessary. Throughout the whole process (the long process of meditation on the Runes, and the use of controlled breathing) we are battling Fafnir, but eventually, if our True Will is strong enough, we will overcome the dragon and learn the language of Desire (Nature). This is when we must abandon the dwarf, (the sexual urge) and achieve our spirit wife. It is from



this point on that we will walk in the path of Siegfried. We will have learned to control and not succumb to the enchantment of the world. Once we have achieved this state, we have to remain pure and reject identification with the lesser material world. We then become a holy order of knights (the Einherjar on earth) in the service of the All-Father.

It is important to understand at his point that wisdom is a reward in itself. It does not ensure success unless one seeks success after one has achieved wisdom. This is why most successful people lack wisdom. Most successful people seek wealth, power and fame for the sake of wealth, power and fame. It is purely an individual urge or desire, motivated by the dwarf. If you seek only these things without wisdom, you might become wealthy and famous, even powerful, but it does not mean you will be happy or productive. In fact, you will be destructive. Most people who seek success, seek to fulfill their earthy appetites. They do not seek wisdom, and thus, will not be wise. They will never find their spirit wife (which is the union of the individual with its Folk) and thus will always be disconnected and unfulfilled. Only by seeking wisdom first, and thus finding your spirit wife (union with the Folk) will you be truly free from being enslaved by your Nature Desire (which drags you down to destruction). Your success will bring happiness, if you first find your spirit wife, and your success will bring harmony and success for everyone who is part of your Folk. From this place you will wield the weapon inherited from the All-Father, safely. Siegfried forgot this, due to the trickery of the half-dwarf, and he lost his spirit wife. This resulted in his down fall, despite his success. He fell into a sleep-state, and in this state—half awake and half asleep—the half-dwarf was able to kill him.

Conquer Desire (slay Fafnir), learn the language of Nature (understanding of your place in the universe), put off your dwarf helper (reject material success for the sake of material success), achieve your spirit wife (union with your Folk), wield the rune weapons that she teaches you (discover that you are an individual, but individualism can only truly exist within the group or Folk), and thus, be wise. If you achieve this, you will have defeated the dragon, but it must be done with persistence and in an orderly manner or you will not achieve wisdom. If you succeed, you will learn the truth about Balder's death and Ragnarok—Odin will pass away and his sons will rule in his place. Learn this truth and you will become invincible, but more importantly—your Folk will become invincible!

# 30

## *THE CHILDREN OF THE GODS*

### **I: THE INDO-EUROPEAN OR ARYAN PEOPLES:**

Beginning around 4,000 B.C., the Indo-European people began migrating outward from their homeland that included regions around the Caspian Sea. They worshiped war Gods who ruled the sky. From the steppes of southern Russia they spread east toward China, south toward Persia and India and west into all parts of Europe. There, they mingled with other, related people who worshiped the fertility Gods who ruled the Earth. In time, these people joined together and their Gods became one. We knew them in the Norse religion as the Aesir and the Vanir.

Our forebears shared a common culture, but as they spread out and lost contact with each other, their languages and religions began to diversity. The primeval bond that they all shared, linked them together across time and space.

In America we speak English, which is a member of the great Indo-European family of languages. It is the essence of our Anglo-Saxon culture, which is one branch of the great family of Indo-European cultures. Germanic, Latin, Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, Greek, Albanian, Iranian, Sanskrit, Tocharian, and many others, some lost and no longer spoken, all trace their origins to the original Indo-European language spoken by the first nation of Aryan peoples around 3000 B.C.

The ancestral homeland of the first Aryans is lost in time and history. Most scholars believed that it was somewhere in the region stretching from the Ukraine in the west and Kazakhstan in the east, south of the Ural mountains and north of the Caucasus mountains. By reconstructing the original language, or at least many of the words of the first tongue, we can describe the natural environment that our fore-bearers lived where by the words they used to describe the flora and fauna that they were familiar with, as well as the landscape that they inhabited.

We should not think of the Aryans as a separate race, but Caucasian and similar to those peoples who already lived within Europe, but their language and culture were markedly unique. When the Indo-Europeans descended upon Europe and mingled with those who already lived there, they found other Caucasians that included Nordic, Alpines and Mediterranean types. The invading Aryans mixed and sometimes conquered the peoples they came into contact with. We can see evidence of the racial memories of this joining in the old myths, about wars between Gods and titans, or the Aesir and the Vanir. The latter were probably fertility Gods that the original Caucasians of Europe worshiped and the former war Gods that the invading Indo-Europeans worshiped.

It is important to understand that the settlement of Europe by the Indo-European Aryans was a cultural change and not a racial change. The modern Europeans are a union of different types, Nordics, Alpines, Dinaric, Mediterranean, Celtic and East Baltic, all of which make up the great European Race. The pre-Aryans of Europe differed from the Indo-European invaders only in culture and language.

On the steppes of Southern Russia, great rivers like the Donets, the Don, the Volga and the Ural originated in the cold northern lands and flowed south to drain in the great bodies of water in the warm southern lands. The Indo-European Aryans watched over their bends, grazing on the grasslands of the steppes that were nurtured by the great rivers, much as the great rivers flowed out of Nifleheim. They rode horses to herd the cattle. The cattle were important as beasts of burden, pulling plows in the fields and wagons for transportation. Horses eventually replaced cattle as the most important means of transportation, with the invention of the chariot. This happened about 2500 B.C. Cattle became the main source for nourishment, providing milk for cheese and meat. Cattle raising was prosperous and population grew. Settlements eventually spread, east, west and south, and soon the pressures from the rapid growth caused bands of Indo-European Aryans to seek new settlements. In time, they began to explore and settle Asia as far east as western China, as far south as India and the Middle East and most importantly they moved into Europe and the Mediterranean. Here they mixed with the original Europeans and created new societies.

## **II: THE GROUP SOUL AND SPIRIT:**

Everyone knows that each individual has a singular soul, but what most people don't understand is that each group of people has a group soul. Our individual

souls are actually a part, or an extension of this group soul, just as our material body is a part of, or extension of, the gene pool of the group DNA that we belong to. The monotheistic religion of Christianity does not recognize the group soul, but that does not mean, it does not exist. The group soul is real, but it is not a simple thing. It has a core, which is a primitive impulse that gives rise to it, and which survives from generation to generation. Even if the race dies out, the primitive core of the group soul lives on. We can call this core the racial spirit. This racial spirit has a unique spiritual essence. It is the same spiritual essence, or life-force, of the Gods. We can learn much of this racial spirit through the runes. The runes are a tool given to us by the Gods to learn how to strengthen our bonds with them, and increase the strength of the racial soul of the Folk. The racial or group soul exists around this racial spirit, or core. The soul that surrounds the core, or racial spirit is strengthened or weakened by what we do in the material world. Thus, it is affected by the physical body of each individual that belongs to the group, nation, race or Folk. The group soul is thus produced by the externals operating on the racial body (the sum total of all the flesh and bone members of the racial group who live, lived and will live).

Because the race soul, or group soul is dependent on the well being of the race body, extensive racial mixing and injure can even destroy the group or race soul. But it can never destroy the race or group spirit. Each race or Folk has its own soul and spirit, which is unique and singular. When a particular group or race is destroyed through extensive mixing, the spiritual essence of the racial groups, which is the same essence of the Gods that gave birth to that racial group or Folk, will continue to exist in the spiritual world. And though the race spirit has ceased to incarnate, its effect on the material world will manifest itself as demons or Gods that appear alien through dreams, urges, and ideas to chosen mediums or shamans. Thus, the end of a pure race does not mean the spirit of that race dies—only the soul. But, the spirit will acts on the material world. In this way, after the Folk adopted the alien creed of Christianity, and though this did not necessarily mean an end to the physical body of the Folk, the racial spirit of the Folk manifested itself by transforming the alien creed into a paganized form of Christianity that was alien to the original Christian religion that was a new form of Judaism. In fact, the original Christian Church split between the followers of Peter (who wanted to restrict the spread of Christianity to Jews) and the followers of Paul (who was successful in spreading the new creed among non-Jews). As Paul's followers proved to be more successful in the next few centuries, Christianity eventually was transformed into a non-Jewish faith and in time was hostile to

Judaism. Again, this was the effect of the racial or Folk spirit on the Folk or race soul.

Individual souls are produced out of the race soul through the process of specialization. Specialization is the combined effects of different and unique factors of birth, the individuals genetic composition or family ancestry, plus the accidents or events the individual experiences throughout his life history. Thus, this process of specialization is the combined forces of the three Norns representing past, present and future. The subtotal of all the millions of acts that we perform within the span of our lives have a collective effect on the group and development of the race or Folk soul, and thus effect all of us to some extent., just as the collective acts of all individual members of the Folk who ever lived in the past, and presently live today effects all of us. No man is an island onto himself.

The individual soul was created within a human female once upon a time. It was done by a God having intercourse with her. Through this intercourse that God gave birth to the race or Folk. By implanting his essence within a mortal female he cultivated lineages within the race which developed the talents bequeathed to the Folk. This is the process of evolution and the growth of our DNA.

We must think of the soul as a means through which we are led to the Light (the resurrection of Balder and the rebirth of Odin). If the soul, both the individual soul and the Folk soul, is injured through wrong actions by individuals and the collective body of individuals of the Folk, the soul can be perverted to the point that it is no longer an instrument by which the Gods that created it, can express their collective will. It can no longer give expression to its true nature and will eventually lead to its own destruction. The extreme harm is death, and this comes about when the soul has lost any reason to be.

# 31

## *THE RUNES*

### **I: RUNELORE:**

The runes are known as the Futhark. This name is taken from the first six runes in the Futhark; Fehu (F), Uruz (U), Thurisaz (TH), Ansuz (A), Raido (R) and Kenaz (K), just as the word “Alphabet” is taken from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet, alpha and beta.

The runes are a collection of symbols that have been used for writing, and where the ancient sought for much of the early systems of writing among the Indo-Europeans in Europe, including the ancient Celts, German, and the Italic people who eventually became the Romans. But the runes are more than just scribe. They grew out of our Folk’s inner consciousness—the collective group soul. Through our collective group soul, Odin transmitted the knowledge of the runes to us. Early Italic writing that both Latin and Celtic are descended from, is clearly related to runic writing that, in time the runes evolved into several versions of the Futhark that included the Elder Futhark, the Younger Futhark, the Anglo-Saxon Futhark and the Armanen Futhark.

The Elder Futhark, which I have used, and is the most popular and familiar, dates back to about 300 BC. Just when our ancestors were first inspired with the knowledge of the runes, is lost in time and probably dates back thousands of years to the end of the last Ice Age, when our people were first born.

According to the tales of the Gods, it was the giant, Mimir who transmitted the knowledge of the runes to Odin, while he hung on the Yggdrasil, scarifying himself to himself. This act of ritual transmutation that Odin undertook to learn the secrets of the runes is the means by which Odin, (the axis of order throughout the universe) learns of the uncontrolled and undirected forces of the cosmos and gave order to them by forming those energies into the system of symbols that we know as the Futhark. When our Folk was born of the Life-Force of the Gods, the knowledge of the Futhark was transmitted to us gradually, over many generations

through the genetic and spiritual link between our race and the Gods. In time, as we matured as a race, the knowledge of the Futhark was organized and used by our ancestors. Many of our ancestors, especially among those who settled in the warmer climate, lost the knowledge and the runes evolved into systems that were used merely for writing.

The runes must be considered an instrument given to us by Odin to help us become close to him and the rest of the Gods and Goddesses. Their use helps to bring order and clarity to our lives.

Three aspects of the runes are the sound, the shape and the secret knowledge that are associated with the runes. A good rune master is one who has mastered this threefold nature of the runes. By studying this threefold nature of the runes, one can, in time, enhance and broaden the inner essence of ourselves as individuals through runic meditation. This process will ultimately enhance the collective essence of our Folk, and strengthen the bond that joins us with our Gods, and thus the collective consciousness of our race. It is the purpose of the Folk Faith to strength these bonds between ourselves and our Gods. Through this process we open ourselves up, permitting the Folk Soul of our people to grow and guide us as individuals, and more importantly, guide our Folk, along the right path of organic and genetic development. In this way, we assure the return of Balder and the rebirth of the Gods and eventually—the resurrection of our Folk.

There are two ways in which we can study and come to understand the runes, as well as making them a part of our lives. The first means is through individual study and meditation. This can be done in many ways, which are up to the individual. However an individual wishes too spent his time, or how much of his time, in studying the runes, will be determined by the ability of the individual to commit to the studying of runes.

The second way to make the runes a part of our daily lives is collectively. This would require being part of a group. The group could be a study group, specifically formed to study and meditate on the runes, or it could be a religious or even social group that consciously incorporates the runes into its activities. These two methods can be used to eventually make the runes a part of our everyday lives.

## II: THE FUTHARK

### *FEHU: F*

The Fehu rune stands for wealth, fire regeneration, cattle, livestock, duty, the worship of health, property and mobile wealth. In ancient times, cattle was used

as a measure of a man's wealth. The Fehu rune gets its shape from their horns. Because cattle were not stationary, but constantly on the move, it represents mobile wealth as well as stationary wealth and property. Besides being a symbol for wealth, it also represents fertility, because cattle were also considered a potent force of fertility. It also represents the female powers of the earth that can be controlled by the power of the will. Fehu is related to the Vanir, especially Njord, Frey and Freyja.

Fehu is associated with three deities: Frigga, Frey and Freyja. These deities are all fertility Gods and derive power from the fire element of the Fehu rune. This power of fire is the force that gives the ability to the seeress Freyja.

Fehru is the outward cosmic force of fire. It is an expansive power that generates out from within the rune master. The development of the Fehu force within the individual helps to increase the individual's animal strengths. To unleash this inner force is like releasing the wolves that lurk within the forest. The use of this rune helps to increase one's charisma, sexual energies and brings joy. It is the force behind most human emotions and through its use, it will draw energies into yourself and increase the quantities of your personal reserves of power. But it must be controlled and used to produce for a purpose, otherwise the individual will lose his will to control his emotions and urges and be ruled by them.

### ***URUZ: U***

Uruz is the rune of primordial strength and power, masculine force, the auroch and the after life. The auroch was a powerful bovine that roamed ancient Europe. It represents the untamed forces of the earth that cannot be controlled by human will. Uruz is the forming force that gives shape and form. It is the power of destiny and the will to power. It represents male strength and power, male virility and fertility. It governs those powers of courage, bravery, determination, perseverance, endurance and tenacity. Uruz is used to enhance those qualities that produce great leadership.

The Uruz is the wild force of formation that is associated with the father of all giants, Ymir.

The Uruz rune is the most vital of energies and eliminates all weaknesses, transforming weaknesses into strengths. It is the unconscious life-force and can be used to draw the life-force to heal. It is the powerful instincts that exist in man and must be controlled or it could be very destructive. It is rooted in the past and is the urge to defend the homeland and one's family and hearth.



***ANSUZ: A***

The “A” rune embodies the Odinnic powers—consciousness. It synthesizes the left and right half of the brain. The Ansuz power is inherited from generation to generation. It is the ancestral power that ties us to our Folk and family. Odin is the God of ancestral forces that gave consciousness to the race of man. Ansuz is the triad of Odin—Odin, Vili and Ve, that gave self-consciousness to man. Like Odin, it embodies the powers of inspiration and wisdom, intelligence, poetry, magic and both social and cosmic order. It is also the power of oratory and communication. Missionaries for the Gods should develop the power of Ansuz to spread the word of the Folk Faith among the Children of the Gods.

This rune is the Odinnic force within our Folk. Its energy is passed down from generation to generation. It is the spiritual link between Odin and his children.

***THURISAZ: TH***

Thurisaz stands for the defense of the home or homeland as well as for the individual. It means thunder, thunderbolt or lightning and is associated with Thor, especially with his hammer, Mjollnir. It is a powerful defensive rune, just as Thor is the defender of the Gods and mankind against the destructive forces of the giants. Thurisaz counters chaos (giants) and maintains order and stability. Being a rune of lightning, it is also a fertility rune and has regenerative powers. When combined with Eihwaz and Elhaz, the three runes become a powerful lucky charm.

Thurisaz is the sign of pure action. It is the instinctual will within all of us that is directed by the cosmic forces of self-consciousness. Thor’s mother was a giantess and so Thurisaz is the embodiment of the Thurses (giant) powers, but because Thor’s father was Odin, (God/Aesir) this power has direction and consciousness. In the negative form, (reverse) the Thurisaz is the undirected power of the chaotic forces. It is Thor’s hammer, Mjollnir, that provides balance between the forces of destruction and construction.

***RAIDO: R***

Raido is the rune of motion, the correct action that needs to be taken. It is also the rune of order, religion and rituals. The natural order of the seasons of the year are represented by Raido. It is the rune for the cycle of days, and the right path for growth and the movement of the sun. When traveling, one should consult

Raido. It is the rune of both spiritual and physical development and is represented by the wagon or chariot. It also represents the rune for the proper order of things in the universe—the physical laws that hold the universe in place. It is the force that causes the planets to revolve around the sun, the sun around the center of the galaxy and the galaxy moving through the universe.

It is also the rune for music, poetry and dance and all these are used in runic-shamanism. The wagon represents the right-way to runic-shamanistic enlightenment. It should be used to help the runic shaman on his travels through the nine worlds.

### ***KENAZ: K***

Kenaz is the rune of illumination, learning, teaching as well as kinship. Its symbolism is the torch or beam of light that gives light to the darkness and illumination on any subject or mystery. Its illumination is but spiritual and intellectual. It can represent the hearth and thus, it is a source of creation. It is also the rune for lust, love and passion. Because of the emotionalism and spiritualism associated with Kenaz, it is the rune that favors artists, craftsmen and all creative people.

Kenaz is also the rune of technological knowledge and should be used for creative endeavors. It's the force that shapes and creates. Because it is the torch-rune, it is also the Loki rune, and its qualities should only be used for positive purposes and never for negative reasons.

### ***GEBO: G***

Gebo is the rune of generosity, hospitality, gifts and represents the Gods collectively. It rules over gift-giving and contracts or anything else that deals with the binding of people or parties together. It is also the rune for making sacrifices to the Gods. Friendships and close relationships of any kind are also governed by Gebo.

Gebo can be considered the Odinnic triad of gifts—self-awareness, breath and shape. Thus, its qualities for gifts exchanged to create bonds, not only between individuals, but as an exchange of gifts between the individual and the nation, and thus strengthening the bond between the individual with his Folk. The individual gives loyalty and is expected to act responsibly. All his action affect the growth and development and health of the Folk. By doing so the individual ensures the creation and preservation of a health environment for himself and his family. In this way his rights as an individual are defended.

***WUNJO: W***

Wunjo is the rule for joy, harmony, fellowship, comradeship, honor and loyalty. This rune deals with emotional and spiritual healing and is used to combat sadness and depression. It enhances one's self-respect and the morale of both the group and the individual. It can be associated with Freyja and with lovers. It is the joy and bliss that are associated with love and love affairs, and is also embodies sex and lust.

This rune is the embodiment of beings of common origin—race, nation, tribes, clans, families—the Folk. It ensures harmony within the group and marshals energies to preserve that harmony. It reinforces healthy sexual unions and defends the Folk and family against all forms of sexual perversions.

***HAGALAZ: H***

Hagalaz is the rune that represents constraint. It symbolizes hail, and is the rune of the creative cosmic forces of the universe. Used properly it will provide well-being and safety. It is the embodiment of the evolutionary forces, and the unity of fire and ice that created the universe. It is the rune of harmony and wholeness, and the rune of hope, growth and youthful confidence. Hagalaz is also the rune that governs the unconsciousness and the underworld.

Hagalaz is often associated with Ymir and thus the embodiment of the world and the universe that were fashioned from his body. It is the ninth rune and the number "9" is the number of completion, wholeness and fulfillment.

***NAUTHIZ: N***

Nauthiz is the rune that represents need and necessity. It is the rune that personified the Norns and Fate. Its shape is that of the bow which can provide protection. It provides what is needed most—protection, security and well-being for the individual and the family. It is also the rune for growth, friction and resistance which are symbolized by this rune, and the dialectic of idea and opposition which causes struggle and conflict that lead to growth and development for both the individual and group.

***ISA: I***

Isa is the rune of eternal ice, especially the cosmic forces of ice. It is not the rune of Niflheim, but the ice streams that flow out of it. It is the rune for the inertia

state of calm, and can be used to restore clam and order during times of crisis and conflict. Isa attracts the fire, and its union with it causes the act of creation. It is also the symbol for the individual ego—the self. It can be used to ensure self-control as well as controlling one’s surroundings.

### ***JERA: J***

Jera is the rune representing the yearly cycles and the solar year, and governs sowing and harvest. It is also the rune of patience and slow progress. This is the rune of progress; sowing and reaping, birth, death and rebirth and can be associated with Balder. It represents the masculine fertility force in the universe, and is also associated with Frey. It can be considered the ying and the yang of the Folk Faith, and its symbols are the opposites of the yearly cycle—summer (fire) and winter (ice).

### ***EIHWAZ: EI***

Eihwaz is the rune representing the yew tree and thus is the embodiment of the vertical cosmic forces, endurance and protection. It is the rune that is associated with the ash, Yggdrasill—the axis of the universe. It is the rune of shamanism and permits one to travel to other worlds. Eihwaz represents the three realms of heaven (Asgard), earth (Midgard) and the underworld (Hel). It is the spiritual path to other states of being and becoming. Its power is the unity of the essence of life and death. It is also a life-giving force and symbolizes the Life-Force of the universe and the race. It is associated with Vular, the God of the winter sky.

### ***PERTHO: P***

Pertho is the rune that symbolizes those qualities of chance, time, cause and effect as well as change and evolution. It is the rune that personifies the power of the Wyrð—or one’s fate and destiny. It binds the past, present and future together and can also be associated with the Norns, especially the eldest of the Norns, Urdar (the past).

It is also the rune of spiritualism, divination and intellectual knowledge. It is the “turning rune” or the “becoming rune.” The past gives birth to the present, and the two collectively shape the future.

***ELHAZ: Z***

Elhaz is symbolized by the elk, and represents protection, the Life-Force, and the union between men and the Gods. Its shape has two meanings; the elk's antlers, which represents masculine defense and protection, but it also symbolizes the image of a human with arms upright, communicating with the Gods. This is the union between men and the Gods, and can be symbolized with the swan. As the life-rune, it is a very powerful force, but when reversed, it represents death and can be very dangerous.

This rune is also the symbol for Bifrost, the rainbow bridge, that links heaven (Asgard) with the earth (Midgard). It is the divine link between the Gods and man, and was referred to as *Daimon*, by the Greeks, and *Genius*, by the Romans. In this way, it is also the symbol for the Valkyries, led by Freyja and sent by Odin.

***SOWILO: S***

Sowilo is the Sun Rune. It represents the sun wheel, success and victory. Like the sun, it radiates power. It is the opposite of the Isa rune because it is the rune representing fire. It embodies the essence of the human will and willpower. Heimdall is the God representing Sowilo—the messenger of Odin and the White God. Two Sowilo runes form the swastika, which is also a symbol for the sun.

The Sowilo rune guides one through life. It is a beacon of consciousness and will bestow honor and success on anyone who develops the will that is the essence of the Sowilo force.

***TIWAZ: T***

Tiwaz is the rune that is the symbol for the cosmic pillar—the axis of the universe. It is the rune for justice, and all juristical matters as well as government. Self-sacrifice, spiritual discipline and universal order are qualities of Tiwaz. It is the rune for the God, Tyr, the God of war and justice. It embodies not only victory in war, but honor, loyalty, duty and self-sacrifice. The Tiwaz rune is the way of the individual who sacrifices himself for the greater good.

Tiwaz is the North Star in the nightly heavens. It is the star around which the heavens rotate—the axis of the universe. Polaris—the North Star—is the visible symbol of Tyr and is sometimes referred to as the Irminsul—the world column.

***BERKANO: B***

Berkano is represented by the birch tree, and the rune of the Earth Mother, It can represent both Frigga and Freyja, as well as Nerthus. It symbolizes the birth-life-death cycle. Berkano governs all things concerning feminine fertility, the womb, and especially the Vanir. It is the female productive and reproductive power. It is a powerful rune for mothers, children and the family, and for weddings. The rune symbol is the image of a woman's breasts and used to increase fertility. It is a nurturing rune and is used to give continuous vigor.

***EHWAZ: E***

Ehwaz is symbolized by the horse and stands for harmony, marriage and family, trust and loyalty. The horse was the sacred animal of the ancient Indo-Europeans, and a symbol of continuance and the steed of Odin and the child of Loki. The horse not only symbolizes the cooperation between rider and steed, but between husband and wife as well. It also stands for the relationship between business partners and the rulers and those who are ruled. The horse is also a male symbol of fertility, and so associated with the God, Frey. It symbolizes twins and especially the relationship between husband and wife and a healthy marriage and family life.

***MANNAZ: M***

Mannaz symbolizes man or the human being. It is the "M" rune that embodies the qualities of divine structure, self-awareness, the God Heimdall, who created the human species and the human races. It is also the rune for the divine spark within the human soul, the unbreakable genetic link between man and the Gods, and the rational mind and reason. As a symbol of man, it refers to the complete human being—what man can become and not what he is. It is also the rune for mead and thus is considered special for innkeepers and all establishments where drink is served.

***LAGUZ: L***

Laguz is the rune that symbolizes running water. This is the power of the primal rivers of life from which the Life-Force flows out to all living things and fills the universe. It also refers to the deep subconscious, and instinct or intuition. It not

only stands for the rivers of life, but the river that the dead must cross to pass into the Netherworld. It is a phallic symbol that combines virtue with fertility.

Lagaz represents the watery depths of the mysteries of death. It is the downward flow of the Life-Force. It represents the uncontrolled madness of sexuality.

### ***INGWAZ: ING***

Ingwaz refers to the expansive energy in the universe. It is the rune that refers to the God, Ing, who is the male consort for the earth Goddess. Sometimes associated with Frey, it is the seed that impregnates the fertile, female force of reproduction. Ingwaz is the male counterpart to the rune, Berkano.

Ingwaz is also the rune of transformation and initiation. Aspects of the heroes descend into the hidden realms or subterranean worlds, and then return transformed. It can be associated with the East, and the realm of the giants, Jotunheim. The giants are the dark forces of chaos, and when one passes through their realm, one is changed in a way that can best be explained through the saying, "That which does not destroys me, makes me stronger."

### ***DAGAZ: D***

Dagaz is the rune that symbolizes the day and the light. Its power is used to balance and synchronize opposite forces. It represents the blinding flash of inspiration or a revelation that enlightens the individual to the mysteries of the universe. Dagaz helps to synchronize opposites to achieve a greater understanding of the whole. It is the process of learning and understanding. It is the new light that illuminates each day anew with the rising of the sun. It symbolizes progress, growth, enlightenment, and fundamental change.

Dagaz is the sign of the triad—Odin-Vili-Ve. It is the revelation of hyper-consciousness that is the cord of the Odinnic cult.

### ***OTHALA: O***

Othala is the rune that stands for home and possessions. It symbolizes property and land as well as homeland—the nation. It also symbolizes the genetic—not just your genetic make-up but the genetic link with our ancestor. It is the rune of "Blood and Soil," the nation and the homeland. It is also the rune of inherited knowledge or tradition and patriotism and love for one's nation and Folk.

In this way, Othala is the sacred grove and the walled off enclosure where the spiritual heritage of the Folk is preserved within a multi-cultural environment. It is the sum total of the heritage of the Folk. It brings order and harmony within the chaotic world of diversity and multi-culturalism. It helps to root the folk to its past and thus ensures its future.

### III: THE ESSENCE OF RUNELORE:

Three aspects of the runes is the sound, the shape and the secret knowledge that is associated with the runes. A good rune master is one who has mastered this three-fold nature of the runes. By studying this three-fold nature of the runes, one can, in time, enhance and broaden the inner essence of ourselves as individuals through runic meditation. This process will ultimately enhance the collective essence of our Folk and strengthen the bond that joins us with our Gods, and thus the collective consciousness of our race. It is the purpose of the Folk Faith to strength these bonds between ourselves and our Gods. Through this process we open ourselves up, permitting the Folk Soul of our people to grow and guide us as individuals, and more importantly, guide our Folk along the right path of organic and genetic development. In this way, we assure the return of Balder and the rebirth of the Gods and eventually—the resurrection of our Folk.

There are two ways in which we can study and come to understand the runes, as well as making them a part of our lives. The first means is through individual study and meditation. This can be done in many ways, which are up to the individual. However each individual wishes to spend their time, or how much of their time, in studying the runes, will be determined by the ability of the individual to commit to the studying of runes.

The second way to make the runes a part of our lives is collectively. This would require being part of a group. The group could be a study group specifically formed to study and meditate on the runes, or it could be a religious or even social group that consciously incorporates the runes into its activities. These two methods can be used to eventually make the runes part of our everyday lives. The Runes are more than just a set of symbols used for writing, but actually make-up the most powerful magical system of the ancient world. Our people lost knowledge of the Runes due to persecution by the Christian Church. Its knowledge was passed down to use in modern times by the preservation through scholars. In the last one hundred and fifty years we have seen a renaissance in runology. They sprang from the same elemental forces that shaped the Gods of our Folk Faith and are indispensable in the restoration of that faith. They are a collection of keys



that can be used to literally INVOKE THE POWER OF THE Gods! With in them lies the secret of the personalities and natures of the Gods. Each individual runes contains the same essence of the individual God that it represents. Used individually, each rune can help us forge new relations to individual Gods. Used collectively, the entire rune system can help to forge a new bound between our Folk and the Gods collectively. The runes are the best means to use when trying to communicate with our Gods.

#### **IV: THE ORIGIN OF THE RUNES:**

There have been many different theories on the origin of the runes, but the truth is simple. The runes evolved along with the culture of the Indo-European peoples as they settled throughout Europe and Central Asia. There are similarities between the Runes and the old Italic and Greek alphabets. The reason is again, simple to explain. All these forms of scripts evolved out of some ancient and primitive script that must have been in use by the original Indo-European Aryans. The Mediterranean scripts of Italy and Greece incorporated influences from the Middle East, especially the Phoenicians, while the runes evolved into their eventual forms (Younger, Elder and Anglo-Saxon Futharks) in northern Europe.

In the Indo-European tradition, script always possessed a magical tradition. The custom that a person's name held magic powers can be traced back into our long-forgotten past. People guarded the spelling of their names, for it was believed that to write your name down would give you a possession that transcended mere material ownership. Warriors often wrote their names on their weapons, and later gave individual names to their weapons. It is this belief that the written word that was passed down, evolved into the tradition that gave rise to the Runes. This led to the tradition of a signature having a legal status.

In our present urbanized and globalistic civilization, our people have lost their connection with the world of nature. We have lost our rootedness and thus we are adrift—like a ship without a rudder. For us, as a Folk, to re-establish our bond with the Gods that gave birth to us, we must reforge the primeval union of our blood with the soil. This does not mean that we must shun technology and withdraw into a primitive existence, but instead learn to synthesize our technology with the way of life that is truly organic and natural. The Runes are an instrument that can help seek this more harmonious way of life. It can also provide us with a guide to discover new technologies that can revolutionize our civilization.

The Runes are a blueprint for revealing hidden forces that create a bond between the user and the ancestral Life-Force that gave existence to us as a peo-

ple. They are the keys, and when used in the proper combinations, they can be used to unlock great secrets that will help us, as a Folk, to reforge our bonds with the Gods. Within them, lies the secret of the existence of God-beings who once lived on earth, and are our direct ancestors. They have degenerated over the millenniums, and their lost qualities, but can be rediscovered through the use of the Runes.

In northern Europe, the idea of a written alphabet possessed magic qualities that evolved free from the influence of the Orient. Originally, it usually was the high priests who possessed knowledge of the written word. They used this knowledge to build bridges between the Folk and the Gods. As societies grew and became more urban, the knowledge of writing spread throughout the entire population as a means of holding a Folk together. The written word is tied-up with the spoken language, and together, the spirit of a culture remains alive within both the script and the spoken word of a Folk. The Nineteen Century German Romantic writer, von Herder, wrote extensively on how the Spirit or *Geist* of a nation or Folk can be ascertained with its language. Both the written and spoken word is an expression of the Spirit or *Geist* of the Folk. The Runes are a higher form of expression of the written word of the Folk, and thus, is an instrument for us to forge bonds between us and our Gods.

# 32

## *THE OATH TO BALDER*

Oh Balder, son of Odin and Frigga, the God good and pure, you are the Light that fills the nine worlds of the universe, the goodness in every man's heart, whose skin, as white as snow, whose hair shines as bright as the rays of the sun, whose eyes are as deep and blue as the oceans, who sits in HEL, waiting for the children of the Gods to call him forth and break the bonds of the Netherworld and rise again, heralding in a new age of Gimli, and the rebirth of the Gods.

I swear to you a most solemn oath to always try to be pure in body and soul as the light that shines within you, and to never do harm to you and your most precious gift—the Grail, your most holy blood that gives life to me and my people, and thus, give new life to the Gods of our ancestors

Hail Odin!  
Hail Balder!  
Hail Gimli!

# *GLOSSARY OF PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS, PLACES AND PROPS*

**AEGIR:** The God of the Sea. He lives under the ocean in his hall, with his wife, Ran, by the island of Hlesey.

**AESIR:** The race of Gods who live in Asgard. They are a race of War Gods and their leader is Odin.

**AFI:** (Grandfather) The ancestor of the race peasants.

**AGNAR:** He is the elder son of the King of the Goths, Hraudung. Frigga favored him over his younger brother, Geirrod, who disinherited him.

**AGNAR:** The son of Geirrod. He was named after his disinherited uncle and was King of the Goths. Odin favored him.

**AI:** (Great Grandfather) He was the ancestor of a race of serfs.

**ALFHEIM:** (Elf World) One of the nine worlds where the elves live.

**ALGRON:** (All Green) Island where Odin, disguised as Harbard, lived for five years.

**ALSVID:** (All Swift) One of the horses that pulls the sun through the heavens.

**ALVIS:** (All Knowing) He was an all-knowing dwarf who challenged Thor to a contest of knowledge and was turned to stone.

**AMMA:** (Grandmother) She was the ancestor of a race of peasants.

**ANDVARI:** The dwarf who owned a great treasure. He cursed it after it was taken from him by Loki, who used it to pay a ransom for Otter's death.

**ANGRBODA:** (Distress-bringer) She was a giantess who was Loki's mistress. She mothered by Loki three children; Fenrir, Jormungand and Hel.

**ARVAK:** (Early Walker) One of the horses that pulls the sun through the heavens.

**ASGARD:** One of the nine worlds and home of the Gods.

**ASK:** (Ash Tree) The name of the first man. He was created by the sons of Bor from a tree.

**AUDUMLA:** The great bovine or cow that provided nourishment for Ymir. The nourishing force within the void Ginnungagap, she licked the ice blocks and thus gave shape to Buri, the forefather of the Gods.

**AURGELMIR:** Another name for Ymir.

**AURVANDIL:** The husband of Groa, the seeress. From his toe, Thor created a star dedicated to him.

**BALDER:** (Baldr, Baldr) The most beautiful God and son of Odin. He is killed by his blind brother, Hodur and is destined to be reborn after Ragnarok, and thus is the instrument of the resurrection of Odin and the Gods.

**BAUGI:** The giant who is Suttung's brother. He hires Odin, disguised as Bolverk.

**BELRGELMIR:** He was the only giant to survive the great flood caused by the blood of Ymir after Ymir is killed by Odin, Vili and Ve.

**BERSERKERS:** (Bear Shirts) They are human warriors who are moved into a frenzy by the spirit of Odin. They go to battle wearing only a bear skin and fight under Odin's protection.

**BESTLA:** A giantess and wife of Bor, and the mother of Odin, Vili and Ve.

**BEYLA:** The maidservant of Freyr and wife of Byggvir.

**BIFROST:** The flaming rainbow bridge that connects Asgard with Midgard.

**BILLING'S DAUGHTER:** The human female who successfully resisted Odin's advances.

**BILSKIRNIR:** Thor's hall in Asgard.

**BODN:** (Vessel) The name of one of the jars that the mead of poetry was brewed from Kvasir's blood.

**BOLVERK:** (Evil-doer) The name that Odin took on his journey to win the mead of poetry.

**BORR:** The son of Buri and father to Odin, Vili and Ve.

**BRAGI:** The son of Odin, he is the husband of Idun and the God of poetry and eloquence.

**BREIDABLIK:** (Broad Splendor) Balder's hall in Asgard.

**BRISING'S NECKLACE:** The name of Freyja's necklace, or sometimes referred to as a girdle. It is a symbol of her femininity and sensuality.

**BROKK:** The dwarf who fashioned three gifts given to the Gods with his brother's help.

**BURI:** The ancestor of the Gods that was licked from a block of ice by Audumla.

**BYGGVIR:** Manservant of Freyr.

- DAY:** He is the son of Night and Delling. He rides through the heavens around the world in a chariot pulled by two horses.
- DRAUPNIR:** Dropper) Odin's golden arm ring that drips eight identical rings every ninth night.
- DURIN:** The second in command of the dwarfs.
- DVALIN:** A dwarf that was turned to stone. The sun is called "Dvalin's delight."
- EARTH:** (Jord or Joerd) The daughter of Night and Annar, and the mother of Thor by Odin. Also referred to as Fjorgyn.
- EDDA:** (Great-grandmother) She is the ancestor of the race of serfs.
- EINHERJAR:** (Heroes) They are the dead heroes that ride out of Valhalla with Odin, to do battle with the giants during Ragnarok.
- EIR:** The Goddess of healing.
- EITRI:** The brother of the dwarf, Brokk. He was the master-smith among the dwarfs and created three gifts for the Gods.
- ELDIR:** (Man of Fire) He is one of Aegir's servants.
- ELIVAGAR:** (Stormy Waves) Name for the eleven rivers that run out of the spring known as Hvergelmir located in Niflheim.
- ELJUDNIR:** Hel's hall in the Netherworld.
- ELLI:** (Old Age) The old woman that Thor wrestles with in Utgard-Loki's hall.
- EMBLA:** (Elm Tree) the name of the first woman created by Odin, Vili and Ve from a fallen tree.
- FAFNIR:** The son of the magician Hreidmar and the brother of Otter.
- FARBAUTI:** (Cruel Striker) The name of the giant who is alleged to be Loki's father.
- FATHIR:** (Father) Ancestor of the Jarls.
- FENRIR:** The great wolf that is the son of Loki, who is bound by the Gods and will kill Odin during Ragnarok.
- FENSALIR:** (Water Halls) The name of Frigga's hall in Asgard.
- FIMAFENG:** (Swift Handler) The name of one of Aegir's servants.
- FIMBULVETR:** The terrible winter that will herald Ragnarok.
- FJALAR:** The brother of the dwarf, Galar. The murder Kvasir and make the mead of poetry from Kvasir's blood.
- FJALAR:** The name of the rooster that will herald the arrival of Ragnarok.
- FJOLSVID:** The name of the giant who is the warder of the hall where Menglad lives.
- FJORGYN:** (Earth or Jord or Joerd) The name of Earth, who is Thor's mother.
- FOLKVANG:** (Field of the Folk) The section of Asgard where Freyja's hall is located.

**FORSETI:** The son of Balder and Nanna. He is the God of Justice.

**FRANANG'S FALL:** The waterfall in Midgard in which Loki tries to hire in the shape of a salmon.

**FREYJA:** The daughter of Njord and Goddess of Love and War. She is the twin sister of Freyr.

**FRIGGA:** The great mother and wife of Odin. She is the patron of the family and motherhood.

**FULLA:** Servant Goddess of Frigga.

**GAGNRAD:** The name taken by Odin when he disguises himself to get into the hall owned by the giant, Vafthrudnir.

**GALAR:** The dwarf and brother of Fjalar. They murder Kvasir and make the mead of poetry from his blood.

**GANGLATI:** (Tardy) The manservant of Hel.

**GANGLOT:** (Tardy) The maidservant of Hel.

**GARM:** The great hound chained at Gniphellir, near the entrance of Hel. During Ragnarok, he breaks free and battles Tyr. They kill each other in battle.

**GEFION:** (Giver) A fertility Goddess.

**GEIRROD:** The name of the giant who tried to kill Thor.

**GEIRROD:** The name of the King of the Goths who was favored by Odin, but tries to torture Odin, who he visits his hall in disguise and is killed by his own sword.

**GARD:** (Field) The name of the frost giantess that Freyr fall in love with and later marries her.

**GILLING GIANT:** The giant killed by the dwarfs Fjalar and Galar. He is avenged by his son, Suttung.

**GIMLI:** The name of the hall where Balder lives after he is resurrected after Ragnarok.

**GINNUNGAGAP:** (Seeming Emptiness) The name of the great void at the beginning of time, that existed between Niflheim and Muspellheim.

**GJALL:** (Ringing Horn) Heimdall's horn that he blows to warn of the attack on Asgard by the giant during Ragnarok.

**GJALP:** (Howler) The daughter of the giant Geirrod. She tried to drown Thor in a flood of her menstrual blood.

**GLADSHEIM:** (Place of Joy) The great hall on the plains of Ida, where the Gods meet to pass judgement on their high seats.

**GLEIPNIR:** The magic bounds made by the dwarfs to bind Fenrir.

**GLITNIR:** Forseti's Hall, which is made from silver and gold.

**GNIPAHELLIR:** (Cliff Cave) The cave in front of the entrance of Hel where Garm is chained.

**GREIP:** (Grasper) Giantess sister of Gjalp and daughter of Geirrod.

**GRID:** She is a giantess and mistress of Odin. She assisted Thor, lending him her magic gloves, girdle and staff.

**GRIMNIR:** (The Hooded One) The name Odin used to disguise himself when he visited Geirrod, the King of the Goths.

**GROA:** Seeress who tried to remove the wet stone from Thor's forehead. She is the wife of Aurvandil and the mother of Svipdag.

**GULLINBURSTI:** (Golden-bristled) The golden board made by the dwarfs and given to Freyr.

**GULLINKAMBI:** (The Golden Comb) The name of the Rooster that calls the Einherjar to battle during Ragnarok.

**GULLFAXI:** (Gold Mane) The name of the horse that belongs to the giant Hrungrnir. It loses a race with Odin's Sleipnir.

**GULLVEIG:** The Goddess from the Vanir who was burned three times. She is also called Heid and was probably Freyja.

**GUNGNIR:** Odin's magic spear.

**GUNNLOD:** The daughter of the giant, Suttung and was ordered to guard the mead of poetry.

**GYLFI:** The King of Sweden. He was tricked by the Goddess, Gefion.

**GYMIR:** The frost giant father of the giantess, Gerd.

**HARBARD:** (Gray-beard) He is the ferryman who insults Thor. He is Odin in disguise.

**HATI:** The name of the wolf that chases the moon. He will swallow it before Ragnarok.

**HEID:** Another name for Gullveig.

**HEIDRUN:** The goat that supplies endless nourishment for the Einherjar in Valhalla.

**HEIMDALL:** The watchman for the Gods. He stands guards at the rainbow bridge. He is also known as Rig and fathered the different races of mankind. He can be considered the evolutionary force of nature.

**HEL:** Loki's daughter. She is half dead and half alive and rules over the Nether-world.

**HEL:** The realm of the dead and ruled over by Hel.

**HERMOD:** The son of Odin and the herald of the Gods. He was sent to Hel to try and resurrect his brother, Balder.



- HILDISVINI:** (Battle Boar) Freyja's human lover was transformed into this boar. He claimed his descend from the giantess Hyndla.
- HIMIBJORG:** (Rocks of Heaven) Heimdall's hall in Asgard.
- HIMINHRJOT:** (Heaven Bellow or Heaven Springer) Hymr's great ox. Thor uses his head as fishing bait.
- HLESEY:** (Island of Hler) The God and Goddess, Aegir and Ran, live in a great hall at the bottom of the sea near this island.
- HLIDSKJALF:** (Hill-opening or Rock-opening) Odin's high seat in the hall, Valaskjalf. From this seat he can see everything that happens in the nine worlds.
- HNITSBJORG:** The fortress where the giant, Suttung, hid the mead of poetry.
- HODUR:** (Hodr, Hoder) Balder's blind twin brother that Loki tricked into killing Balder. He returns with Balder after Ragnarok.
- HODDMIMIR'S WOOD:** (Hoddmimishalt) This is another name for Yggdrasill, the World Tree.
- HONIR:** The long-legged God sent by Odin to live with the Vanir. He will return after Ragnarok.
- HRAESVELG:** (Corpse Eater) The giant who takes the form of a great eagle. His wings cause the winds of the world.
- HREIDMAR:** Farmer and magician. He is father to Otter, Fanir and Regin. He acquired a great treasure with a curse on it from Odin, Honir and Loki.
- HRIMFAXI:** (Frost-maned) Night's horse.
- HRODVITNIR:** Another name for the Wolf, Fenrir.
- HRUNGNIR:** He was considered the strongest of the giants. He lost a race with Odin and was killed in a duel with Thor.
- HUGI:** (Thought) The young giant who beat Thor's human servant in a race, and was actually the embodiment of Utgard-Loki's thoughts.
- HUGINN:** (Thought) The name of one of Odin's two ravens.
- HVERGELMIR:** Spring in Niflheim located under one of the roots of the Yggdrasill. Eleven rivers known as the Elivigar flow from it.
- HYMIR:** Thor took this giant's massive cauldron and gave it to Aegir to brew ale for the Gods.
- HYNDLA:** (She-dog) Giantess who reveals the lineage of Freyja's lover, Otter.
- HYRROKIN:** Giantess who drags Balder's funeral boat down to the sea.
- IDAVOLL:** (Field of Deeds) The vast central plain in Asgard. The halls, Gladsheim and Vingolf are located on it.
- IDUN:** (Idunn) The Goddess of Eternal Youth, and the wife of Bragi. She possesses golden apples that she feeds to the Gods and Goddesses.

**IVALDI:** There are two dwarfs known as ‘the sons of Ivaldi.’ They make three great treasures that they give to the Gods as gifts.

**IVING:** The name of the river that divides Asgard from Jotunheim. It never freezes.

**JARL:** (Earl or Noble-born) Fathered by Heimdall and taught the secret of the Runes. He fathers a race of supermen.

**JARNSAXA:** (Iron Cutlass) Giantess who was Thor’s mistress. Their son was Magni.

**JORMUNGAND:** The World or Midgard Serpent and Loki’s son. He will battle and be killed by Thor at Ragnarok, but his venom will also kill Thor.

**KARL:** (Churl) The ancestor of a race of peasants.

**KON:** (King) The son of Jarl whom Heimdall adopts as his own son. He is taught the speech of the birds and the secret of the Runes.

**KVASIR:** The wisest man that ever lived. He was created by Odin and killed by dwarfs. His blood was used to make the mead of poetry.

**LAERAD:** Another name for the Yggdrasill.

**LAUFEY:** The giantess mother of Loki.

**LIF:** (Life) The name of the man who survived Ragnarok by hiding in the branches of the Yggdrasill.

**LIFTHRASIR:** The name of the woman who survived Ragnarok by hiding in the branches of the Yggdrasill.

**LIT:** The dwarf that was cremated at Balder’s funeral.

**LODDFAFNIR:** The human man who fought his way to the Well of Urd. Once there, he learned the wisdom of the Gods.

**LOFN:** The Goddess who approves of illicit unions.

**LOGI:** (Flames) A fire giant who beats Loki in an eating contest in Utgard-Loki’s hall.

**LOKI:** The fire giant that is adopted by the Gods. He is a mischief-maker and known as the Sly One, the Trickster, the Shape Changer, the Master of Lies, the Evil One, the Sky Traveler and many other names. He grows progressively evil and eventually is responsible for Balder’s death. He leads the forces of destruction against the Gods in the final battle that takes place during Ragnarok. He is killed by Heimdall.

**LYFJABERG:** (Hill of Healing) A mountain in Jotunheim located near Menglad’s hall.

**LYNGVI:** The island located in Lake Amsvartnir, where Fenrir is bounded by the Gods.

**LYR:** (Heat-holding) Menglad’s hall in Jotunheim.

- MAGNI:** (Might) the name of Thor's son. His mother was the giantess, Jarnsaxa, and he and his brother Modi will inherit Thor's hammer after Ragnarok.
- MENGLAD:** (Necklace Glad) She was the woman that was won by Svipdag, the son of the seeress, Groa. She has much in common with the Goddess, Freyja.
- MIDGARD:** (Middle Earth or Middle World) The world where men live.
- MIMIR:** The wise Gods sent to live with the Vanir by Odin. He is killed by the Vanir and his head is preserved by Odin so that he might continue to bestow on the All-Father his good advice. His head is placed by the Well of Mimir.
- MIMIR'S WELL:** The Well of Wisdom under one of the roots of the Yggdrasill. It is protected by Mimir's head.
- MIST CALF:** (Mokkurkalfi) Giant made of clay, nine leagues tall.
- MJOLLNIR:** The name of Thor's hammer. The symbol of destruction, defense, fertility and resurrection.
- MODGUD:** The maiden who guards the bridge over the River Gjoll in Jotunheim.
- MODI:** One of the sons of Thor, who will inherit his hammer after Ragnarok.
- MODSOGNIR:** Commander of the dwarfs.
- MOON:** (Mani) Son of Mundilfari. He drives the moon on its course across the nightly heavens.
- MOTHIR:** (Mother) Ancestor to a race of supermen.
- MUNDILFARI:** (Turner) The father of the Moon and the Sun.
- MUNINN:** (Memory) The name of one of Odin's two ravens.
- MUSPELLHEIM:** The realm of eternal fire located at the southern end of Ginungagap. Surtur rules over the realm.
- MUSPELL:** The sons of Surtur who live within Muspellheim.
- NAGLFAR:** A ship made from the nails of dead men. It will carry the giants during Ragnarok to do battle with the Gods.
- NANNA:** The name of Balder's wife. She is the daughter of Nep.
- NARVI:** The giant father of the Night.
- NARVI:** (Nari) His father is Loki and his mother is Sigyn. He is also known as Nari. He is killed by his brother, Vali, and his entrails are used to bound Loki to a rock.
- NASTROND:** (Shore of Corpses) Located in Hel. The hall that houses evil-doers live. The dragon, Nidhogg feeds on their corpses in the hall.
- NIDHOGG:** (Corpse Tearer) The dragon that exists in Hel. He feeds on the corpses of the dead when he is not gnawing on the roots of the Yggdrasill in Niflheim.

**NIGHT:** The daughter of Narvi and the mother of Day. She rides the horse, Hrimfaxi through the heavens.

**NJORD:** The father of the Vanir, the fertility Gods. He is the father of Freyr and Freyja and is married to Skadi. His hall, Noatun, is located on the shore, by the sea.

**NOATUN:** (Shipyard of Harbor) The name of Njord's hall.

**NORNS:** They are the Fates who weave the destiny of Gods and men. The three primary Norns are Urd, (Past or Fate) Skuld (Future of Being) and Verdandi (Present or Necessity).

**ODUR:** Freyja's husband who wanders the world while Freyja weeps for him.

**ODIN:** (Wotan, Woden, Odinn) He is the All-Father, the leader of the Aesir, and the God of Poetry, Battle, Death, and the Leader of the Wild Hunt. He is also know by many names that include, the Terrible One, the One-eyed, the Rune Master, and the Father of Battle.

**ODRORIR:** (Heart Stirrer) The great cauldron that contains the mead of poetry.

**OKOLNIR:** (Not Cold) The name of the region of the world in the Age of Gimli that will always be warm. The hall, Brimir will be built there.

**OTTAR:** Freyja's human lover. He was disguised as a boar, Hildisvini and Freyja roar him. He is descended from Sigurd (Siegfried).

**OTTER:** He is the son of the farmer-magician, Hreidmar, who was killed by Loki and Odin.

**RAGNAROK:** (Destruction of the Powers) The name of the end of time, when the Gods and giants will battle each other. The universe will be destroyed, but it will herald in the new Age of Gimli.

**RAN:** The wife of Aegir. She is know to drag men down in her net, and drown them in the sea.

**RATATOSK:** (Swift Teeth) The squirrel that runs up and down the Yggdrasill, carrying insults between the eagle that lives in the highest branches and the dragon that gnaws on its roots.

**REGIN:** The son of the Hreifmar and the brother of Otter and Fanir.

**RIG:** (King) The name Heimdal used to create the different races of men.

**RIND:** The Goddess-mistress of Odin. They have a son named Vali.

**RINGHORN:** The name of the funeral ship that carried the bodies of Balder and Nanna out to sea as it burned.

**ROSKVA:** The sister of Thialfi who becomes one of Thor's servants.

**SAGA:** The Goddess who drinks with Odin in her hall, Sokkvabekk every day.

**SESSRUMNIR:** (Rich in Seats) The name of Freyja's hall in Asgard.

**SIF:** Thor's wife and the Goddess of Spring. Loki cut off her hair, but it was replaced by golden hair made by the dwarfs.

**SIGYN:** Loki's faithful wife.

**SINDRI:** The name of the hall that will be built in the Age of Gimli. Its roof will be made of red gold.

**SJORN:** She is the Goddess of Passion.

**SKADI:** Daughter of the giant, Thiazi who married Njord. She is associated with winter activities such as skiing and hunting.

**SKIDBLODNIR:** (Wooden-bladed) Freyr's ship that was built by the sons of Ivaldi. He was able to fold it and place it in his pocket.

**SKINFAXI:** (Shining-maned) The name of the horse that carries Day across the sky.

**SKIRNIR:** (Shining) He is the messenger of Freyr, and was sent to retrieve Grid as Freyr's wife.

**SKOLL:** Name of the wolf that chases the sun. Right before Ragnarok, it will catch the sun and devour it.

**SKRYMIR:** (Big Bloke) Utgard-Loki this the disguise of a super big giant during his encounter with Thor and his friends.

**SKULD:** (Future) One of the three primary Fates.

**SLEIPNIR:** Odin's eight-legged horse. He was sired by Loki in the disguise of a horse.

**SNOR:** (Snoer) The ancestor of a race of peasants.

**SOKKVABEKK:** (Sinking floor) The name of Saga's hall in Asgard.

**SON:** (Blood) The name of one of the bowls which has the mead of poetry.

**SUN:** (Sol) The Daughter of Mundilfar. She drive the chariot of the sun across the sky every day.

**SURTUR:** (Black) The name f the father of fire giants that live in Muspellheim. He will set fire to Asgard during Ragnarok.

**SUTTUNG:** The son of the giant, Gilling was guarded the mead of poetry.

**SVADILFARI:** The name of the stallion who helped the giant that the Gods commissioned to build a wall guarding Asgard

**SVARTALFHEIM:** The land of the dark elves or the dwarfs.

**SVIPDAG:** (Swift Day) The son of the seeress who seeks and wins Mangled.

**SYN:** The Goddess who was invoked by defendants at trials.

**TANNGNOST:** (Tooth Grinder) One of two goats that pulls Thor's chariot. The other is named Tanngrisni.

**TANNGRISNI:** (Tooth Grinder) One of the two goats that pulls Thor's chariot. The other s named Tanngmmost.

**THIALFI:** The son of a farmer who, along with his siter, become's Thor's servant. He runs a race against Hugi (Thought).

**THIAZI:** The giant who steals Idun's golden apples and is killed by the Gods.

**THIR:** (Drudge) The human wife of Thrall.

**THOKK:** The giantess who is actually Loki in disguise, who refuses to weep for Loki and thus prevents his resurrection.

**THOR:** (Thorr, Donar, Thunar, Thunor, Donner) he son of Odin and Earth. His is the God of Thunder and the Protector of mankind. He is the strongest of the Gods and is married to Sif. He is also a fertility God and his most power weapon is his hammer. He also has a chariot pulled by two goats. He is too heavy to cross the rainbow bridge.

**THRALL:** The son of Ai and Edda, and the husband of Thir.

**THRUD:** (Might) She is Thor's daughter.

**THRUDHEIM:** (Place of Might) It is the region of Asgard ruled by Thor. Thor's hall, Bilskirnir is located there.

**THRYM:** The King of the Frost Giants who stole Thor's hammer, and was killed by Thor.

**THRYMHEIM:** (Place of Din) The stronghold of the giant, Thiazi. It is located in the mountains. When Thiazi is killed by the Gods, his daughter, Skadi becomes its owner.

**TYR:** The God of War and Justice. He is a son of Odin. Considered the bravest of the Gods, he loses his right hand when he places it in Fenrir's mouth, so that the Gods could bound the wolf.

**ULLER:** The God of Winter and is associated with skiing and archery.

**URD:** (Fate) One of the three primary Norns. She is associated with destiny, and owns the Well of Urd.

**URD:** The well owned by the Norn of the same. It is located at one of the roots of the Yggdrasill in Asgard, and the Gods hold a daily assembly there.

**UTGARD:** The stronghold of Utgard-Loki, in Jotunheim.

**UTGARD-LOKI:** The name of the giant (possibly Loki?) Who is a master of illusion.

**VAFTHRUDNIR:** (Mighty in Riddles) A wise giant who is tricked by Odin in a contest of knowledge. When he loses he is killed by Odin.

**VALI:** The son of Loki and his wife, Sigyn. He is transformed into a wolf by the Gods, and he then kill his brother, Nari.

**VALI:** The son of Odin and the giantess, Rind. He is the avengener of his brother, Balder.

**VALASKJALF:** (Shelf of the Slain) Odin's hall in Asgard.

**VALHALLA:** (Hall of the Slain) The immense hall in Asgard where the spirits of fallen heroes are brought by Odin. There, they (the Einherjar) fight, feast and wait for the time when they will ride to battle with Odin during Ragnarok.

**VALKYRIES:** (Chooser of the Slain) Nine beautiful daughter of Odin, who are led by Freyja and collect the spirits heroes, and brings them back to Valhalla.

**VANAHEIM:** The domain where the Vanir live.

**VANIR:** The race of fertility Gods that unite with the Aesir.

**VAR:** (Oath) The Goddess of marriage oaths, who punishes those who break them.

**VE:** The son of Bor and the brother of Odin and Vili.

**VERDANDI:** (Present) One of the three primary Norns.

**VIDAR:** The son of Odin and the giantess, Grid, who will avenge Odin's death at Ragnarok. He will survive Ragnarok.

**VIGRID:** (Battle Shaker) The vast plain in Asgard on which the final battle of Ragnarok will be fought.

**VILI:** The son of Bor and the brother of Odin and Ve.

**VIMUR:** The torrent that was formed by the giantess, Gjalp's, menstrual blood.

**VINGOLF:** The hall in Asgard in which the Goddesses gather and sit in council.

**VON:** (Expectation) The river formed the drool of Fenrir.

**VOR:** The Goddess in which nothing is hidden.

**YDALLER:** (Yew Dales) The hall of Uller in Asgard.

**YGGDRASILL:** (The Terrible One's Horse) It is the World Tree. Within the branches of this ash tree, the nine worlds reside.

**YMIR:** The first of all giants, formed from the mixing of fire and ice in the Gin-nungagap. The three Gods, Odin, Vili and Ve kill him and fashion the universe from his body.