

Loki's Story

Arni Fannar

*Festur mun slitna,
En freki renna.*

*Bonds will break,
Fire will spread.*

- Repeated lines in Völuspá

THE HAMMER alone would have sufficed to keep the people at bay. Its reputation was well established, but then, any fresh demonstration of its power would also speak for itself. No shield or armor could withstand its descent, any more than would the barren surface of water. Any humble being unfortunate enough to become subject to its brute force was sure to experience their skeleton shattering underneath their muscles, and themselves deforming before collapsing feebly to the

LOKI'S STORY 4

ground. The hammer had taken down houses, and some even claimed that it could open up mountains, or the crust of the earth itself. It had remained in the same hands for as long as anyone knew, and it had earned its mender, Thor, the title of the *Regin of Thunder*.

Yet the Regin of Thunder was merely second in command to the *All-father*, the one true leader of Regin, called Odin. Under the All-father's command, Regin had defeated the Jotunns and had consequently taken over as rulers over the world. From then on Regin resided, as the Jotunns had, in the land of Asgarden. Along with Odin and Thor there was Dagur, Eir, Bragi, Frigg, Hermodur, Baldur, Vidarr, Freyr, Freyja, Idunn, Gefjun, Sif, Hodur, Njordur, Nanna, Magni, Kvasir, Tyr and Loki, living among the elite of loyal warriors and trusted associates. Otherwise the world of Regin was kept separate from that of the commoners. There were only the occasional errands to the *nether regions*, for Regin to reassert their rule and control over the masses. Odin would bring Thor along with him on those journeys, but then the two of them would usually remain secretive regarding their affairs when they had returned to Asgarden. Stories would surface, from sources unknown, on what Thor and Odin had encountered during their time away, but only when they had come across some serious cause for concern for

LOKI'S STORY 5

the rest of Regin would a word be given directly from Odin to the others upon his return.

It was coming back from one of those travels in the winter that Odin was first seen with a significant injury on his face: he had lost an eye. The sight of him caused an immediate stir among Regin. Odin locked himself up and wouldn't give a word to anyone. Those who had seen him were left to wonder what possible adversary could have gotten the better of their All-father, with Thor at his side. Or so it was until the story got out that Odin had voluntarily *given* his eye up in exchange for an elixir: a cup from the *Well of Infinite Wisdom*. It was said to have been a cunning move on Odin's part, as with that his wisdom had become that of the well.

Loki burst out laughing as he was given this account by his fellow Regin, Tyr.

"Naturally," Loki remarked, "Odin's disfiguring injuries *would* have to have been caused by something that ultimately gained him respect rather than humiliation."

"You sound doubtful," Tyr uttered without any audible humor in his voice.

"Oh, my dear Tyr, I am merely taken aback to learn that the All-father hadn't *already* drained down the *entire* Well of eternal wisdom (that I admit I had never heard of) and that it is only now that he has acquired his

LOKI'S STORY 6

superior senses. But what will this well do with our dear Odin's severed eye, you figure? I wonder if the All-father will let us in on it."

Tyr remained stone-faced and spoke in a tone of voice that matched that exterior, showing that he would not be taken by Loki's charm.

"It might be your own lack of imagination in that regard that keeps you away from making the discoveries and achievements of your All-father," he remarked.

"My dear Tyr, I only *lack* the imagination to fall for the tall tales that the other Regin spew about themselves – useful for keeping the peasants of this land in awe, perhaps, but it sounds so sad that we should be resorting to using them on each other, don't you think?"

"Why not voice these complaints of yours to Odin himself? I wonder if you would dare."

"Well... what for? He must know my opinion already, seeing as he now possesses *infinite* wisdom."

As Tyr turned his back to Loki at the end of their conversation, it turned out to mark the beginning of a cold shoulder that was to last for weeks, if not more. Loki would get no more news of Odin from Tyr. Regrettably so, as Loki had come to rely on Tyr as a source of information and no one else put much importance in keeping Loki informed. What was more,

LOKI'S STORY 7

with Regin's gossipy nature, he suspected that Tyr would be telling around what Loki had said to him, even in exaggerated details.

Odin had kept to himself since he had returned with his new face. Eventually it was Thor who appeared before Regin with an announcement.

"A word from Odin," Thor began in his habitual way, "who these days is engaged in important research for all of you. Lately there have been several incidents of misfortune bestowing itself upon us Regin. The All-father wanted me to inform you that he has traced all these occurrences to the workings of a *single* source: an evil wizard in our presence."

"What does that mean, *in our presence?*" Freyja shouted out. The crowd broke out into a murmur now that Thor had been interrupted.

"The All-father has informed me," Thor shouted over the clamor, "that although he has not managed to *locate* this fiend just yet, the prominent outcome of the evildoer's efforts against us is testament to his proximity to us."

A communal gasp was audible. It was Loki's turn to speak out.

"Are Odin's eye injuries by any chance a part of these misfortunes that you speak of, Regin of Thunder?"

LOKI'S STORY 8

“They are *not*. As you should all know by now, Odin willingly traded his eye to gain vision far greater than any of us will ever enjoy.”

Challenging Thor any further on this subject wasn't tempting enough for Loki to go through with it, yet there was no telling whether he hadn't already managed to upset the notoriously temperamental Regin with that single remark.

After the gathering Loki saw Thor marching (the only way he ever moved) towards him.

“Loki – *the flame* – you who owe your reputation to nothing other than this name you were honored with at birth; how that must pain you, seeing as how you have *failed* to live up to it. While flames are powerful and prolific forces of nature, you cower behind the true fighters of your generation and then swagger in their success as if it was your own doing.”

This approach wasn't enough to make Loki feel ruffled. He was well familiar with Thor's habitual way of greeting, which involved putting the other party down merely to establish a hierarchy before the actual conversation. Yet Loki couldn't resist responding to Thor in somewhat the same spirit.

“Well, at least everything that I *have* accomplished, so far, I've had to manage without the aid of a giant hammer, my good Thor.”

LOKI'S STORY 9

Loki felt confident that the bantering wasn't the real occasion for their conversation, and that it was simply Thor's way of building up to something else. However, Loki hadn't been in the mind to let Thor's jabbering go over his head without a rebuttal.

"And even now when you are confronted with the *facts*," Thor went on undeterred, "you try to cover up for your inadequacy. Well, it is of no consequence what you think of yourself. However, Odin wants to give you a chance to redeem your reputation, and to make something of your name, for once. He has suggested that you make a journey with me to the nether regions in his place. There, he believes, you can be of some use."

"Then it sounds as if the two of you are in disagreement over the matter?"

"Not exactly," said Thor. "Don't forget that I will be joining you on this journey, and I believe my presence by your side will encourage you to do as is expected of you."

"And what would the thing be that's expected of me? It might help me to actually know."

"You will get to know that when the time is right. All you need to know for now is that we set off tomorrow."

And with that Thor turned around and left Loki.

LOKI'S STORY 10



TWO ADDITIONAL chariots were sent off from Asgarden along with the one housing Thor and Loki. They carried a few immaterial servants of Odin's, but were later to be used for storing goods of contributions that the people that they met on their way would make to Regin, and were then to be sent back to Asgarden ahead of Thor and Loki.

In the first village that they reached it became clear from the reception they got that Thor wouldn't need to be introduced to the townsfolk. This wouldn't be his first time there, and everyone understood right away that he was trouble. Every conversation came to a halt at his appearance. Onlookers waited in silence for him to move on. Loki wondered what unpleasant display of power by Thor could have conditioned the people in this way. Imagination alone wouldn't bring out such a unified alarm. Would Odin have been received in the same way?

"The All-father is not with you?" asked a burly blacksmith, who had turned unfashionably meek when confronted with the lumbering Thor.

"He is much occupied these days," Thor growled, with a note of hostility that would ward off any further inquiries into the matter. "Loki came with me instead," he added as an afterthought. It was the first time during

LOKI'S STORY 11

their journey together that Thor had directed anyone's attention to his companion. In fact the blacksmith hadn't so much as glanced in Loki's direction until now that he had been given permission by Thor.

"A pleasure," the blacksmith said to Loki. "Is he family?" he asked Thor.

"He is *Regin*," Thor clarified, somehow assuming that the locals would understand the meaning of that, whereas Loki doubted that people in these parts had any sense of whether Regin had family ties to each other or not.

Thor received numerous gifts from the people, and all of them were loaded into one of the empty chariots, which was then sent back to Asgarden, while Thor and Loki headed on to their next destination.

They reached another small town, with a small-minded population – people who showed the same manner of reaction to Thor as those of the previous village. Thor was known, respected and feared, while Loki passed relatively unnoticed. Thor was turning out to be a more tiring travelling companion than Loki had initially anticipated, due largely to the humility that he was met with everywhere he went, and by how all of it in turn served to enhance Thor's overbearing self-assurance. Once they had crossed four of those villages, Loki realized that he already had a hard time telling

LOKI'S STORY 12

them apart in his memory; yet that did not matter to him, as he felt no desire to return back to any of them.

Their fifth destination turned out to be different: a city where a grand feast was already under way on their arrival, with parades and music being played in the streets. These people wouldn't let Thor's presence sully their celebration. Instead they got him drunk. It was admirable to Loki. Thor went along with it, adapting to the mood of the locals and their festivities – a side of him that hadn't come out in public before. And Loki, never being one to sit aside during anarchic celebrations, joined in on the fun as well. Thor let his guard down so completely that he ended up having a laughing fit that clearly hadn't been expressed often enough to become polished and refined, resonating rather as a noise coming from an assembly of barnyard animals. The whole experience was rejuvenating to Loki, yet he doubted that it could have much to do with the real purpose of their journey.

As they were taking off from the city, in the one remaining chariot, Loki brought the matter up with Thor.

“Good crowd, but I am still at loss as to where all of this is going.”

LOKI'S STORY 13

Thor turned away from Loki, before he spoke – a rare indication from the Regin of Thunder that he would then go on without any intention of intimidation.

“You will notice how the attitudes change towards us the further we move away from Asgarden,” a pensive Thor remarked.

“So, are there to be no more peasants *falling to their knees* at your arrival?”

“The world stretches out far,” Thor went on, ignoring Loki’s words – whether that was out of self-disciplined determination or simply for not having caught the irony in them. “It is much bigger than the Regin back home realize, and in the furthest quarters of the world, in territories that are uncharted to us, there are other rulers that reign.”

“And does that make old Odin jealous? I don’t see how it could otherwise be any concern of ours – if these are places we have never even heard of. Why not let them have their own rulers in peace?”

“Ah, but you see, these rulers have influences through their widespread legends. Our own tales pale in comparison – or so I am told. Their myths are *the voice of rebellion*, says Odin. He foresees that the stories of these false idols might be the first step in riling the people up against us.”

LOKI'S STORY 14

“Do you mean to tell me, dear Thor, that Odin worries that we will be overthrown by *legends*? What about your hammer? Surely it could put the people in their place, no?”

“Odin fears not. He says that the commoners might end up viewing me as their adversary if I approach them with too much hostility. That could make them more eager to join forces with the other side. No, better to *convince* the people of our might, Odin says, without the use of excessive force.

“You are a poet, are you not, Loki? Normally that would prevent you from achieving anything noteworthy in the whole of your lifetime, but on this occasion Odin believes that you can be of help. If you take it on you to learn the legends of the other rulers – the *Olympians*, they are called – then Odin expects that you could be able to match them, or preferably outdo them in their glory, with your own tales of us Regin. Of course, if you don't, I might as well leave you out here, as you will never be of any value to your kind.”

“Well, since we have come this far already,” Loki said, “I suppose we should at least see if we can pick up on any of these tales once we have ventured a bit further away from Asgarden.”

The groveling reception that Thor had become accustomed to turned out to be completely absent in the

LOKI'S STORY 15

city that followed. No one took much notice of the two of them. They casually entered a drinking house without drawing attention to themselves, and the proprietor was the first person to show any kind of interest in them, by bluntly asking them what they were doing there. Thor was struck silent by the unconventional approach, not being used to having to explain himself to anyone. It was evident that he didn't know how to react in the situation, so Loki took it on himself to do the talking.

"I beg, do not direct such demanding questions to this unskilled worker of mine – excellent out in the fields, as you can see by his sizeable muscles, but less so in the matter of conversation. I would bet that he didn't even understand the words coming out of your mouth. We are only staying in this fair city for a few days, you see. On our first night we would appreciate it greatly if we were to be able to find some entertainment around here."

"Are you saying my bar isn't entertaining enough for you?"

The proprietor's words produced a faint echo in the establishment that at the moment was completely void of any kind of festivities, yet Loki gathered that the proud barman wouldn't care for having that pointed out to him. At the same time, Loki could imagine the

LOKI'S STORY 16

blood boiling in Thor over the attitude they were being treated with, but nonetheless the Regin of Thunder managed to stay in character as Loki's voiceless worker.

"It is a fine establishment indeed," Loki said, throwing the proprietor his most convincing smile. "But we were hoping to be entertained with stories – *tall tales*, if you will – should there be a place in these parts where people get together and listen to such musings."

The proprietor eyed Thor, as he mumbled that *he could see how that would be a welcome change*. He then responded that if he were to hear of any such events taking place in the coming days he would make sure to let them know, in case they returned themselves.

Once the two Regin were back outside, Thor erupted.

"You should have asked him about the legends of the Olympians rather than having fun at my expense! I should go back in there right now and take care of it – teach the lowlife of a barman some manners while I'm at it."

"It's all a part of a greater design, my dear Thor. They won't tell us *anything* if they find out who we are. If we get them used to looking down on you, they will never suspect your true nature. Just look at it as a curious experiment for you."

LOKI'S STORY 17

“At the end of it I will let them know who I really am,” Thor said, with a wicked smile that gave away the nature of his thoughts towards the proprietor and whoever else would come to look down on him.

“If we are concerned with winning these people over, that would be a travesty of a move. However, it’s inspiring to hear that you are at least considering going along with the plan, so I’ll take comfort in that.”

As it turned out, Thor wasn’t in the mind to go on pretending to be Loki’s mute worker at all. Instead he kept to himself for the rest of the day. This left Loki to his own devices when he revisited the drinking house, in good faith that the proprietor would come through with some useful information. Loki figured that any gifted storyteller in these parts would be likely to know a tale or two of the Olympians.

But the proprietor was quick to dismiss the matter, shaking his head and then going on with his business. Loki remained in the drinking house nonetheless. He eventually managed to strike up a conversation with a traveler who had come from the south. The two of them had a lengthy exchange, but the traveler wouldn’t initiate talking about the Olympian *Gods* on his own accord. Loki had to press him on the matter.

“What kind of *tales* are you after?” the man asked Loki. “You want to know about Zeus, or Apollo?”

LOKI'S STORY 18

"Are there many stories about them?" Loki asked, trying to come off as mostly disinterested, bringing the jug of ale to his mouth while he waited for the answer.

"*Endless,*" the traveler asserted. "Nobody knows all of them. But I have no time to get into that now." Instead he got up from the table and left.

Loki's next attempt was with a woman whom he had seen the traveler conversing with. As soon as she was by herself Loki approached her. He introduced himself with one of the names that had come up earlier in reference to the Olympians: Zeus.

"You are named after *Zeus*?" the women asked, in a mixed tone of awe and admiration.

"How do you know I am not the one true Zeus?"

"Oh, please. How audacious of your parents though, to give you that name – *if* they really did. It can be dangerous to show allegiance so openly to the Olympians."

"But Zeus is my idol," Loki went on, in a purposefully naïve tone of voice. "I aspire to be just like him, in every way."

"Zeus has many wives. Is that what you are aiming at?"

"I didn't know that about him."

"Then you clearly know nothing about him at all."

"Perhaps not. Will you educate me?"

LOKI'S STORY 19

"Why would I waste my time on that?" she responded coolly. "What would I get in return?"

"I could give you coins, if that's what you wanted. Or I could tell you stories of Regin, from the north."

It didn't take any more convincing than that. She began by telling him stories of Zeus and his many wives. The woman – whose name was Petra – seemed to have all their tales memorized. She went on to tell Loki about other Olympians, about Poseidon, Heracles, Apollo, as the two of them left the bar to take a walk. They ended up in the room where Loki was staying, and there Petra went on, with Loki inside her, telling him about Dionysus, the God of wine and fertility.

She ceased her storytelling only at the climax of their lovemaking. In the aftermath she remained lying on the bed, staring vacantly up at the ceiling.

"Hey, you were going to give me stories about Regin," she reminded him.

"Oh, yes," Loki said, lying on his back next to her. "I am a Regin."

Petra turned to him.

"Hold on; *before*, you were Zeus, and now you are Regin?"

"I apologize; I only told you that in the beginning to see if you knew anything about the Olympians. My real name is Loki, and Odin sent me here to learn about

LOKI'S STORY 20

those Gods of yours, as he believes that he has to compete against their fame, or else they might overthrow him."

"Does that mean that you are going to Asgarden?"

"We *are*, eventually; once we have exhausted our resources here."

"What's the point of exhausting yourselves at all? You should just bring me back with you, and then, in the comfort of your own kingdom, I will tell you everything I know about the Olympians – which probably constitutes for *all* you need to know."

Loki got up.

"I am afraid that would require convincing my very stubborn travelling companion."

"But you are convincing," said Petra, stretching out on his bed, naked.

Loki got dressed and left her there.

He found Thor, who was in a thunderous mood.

"We leave this city tonight," Thor exclaimed.

"Fine," said Loki. "We can go back home anyway. We already have what we came for: a woman with extensive knowledge of the Olympian Gods. We only have to bring her back with us."

Thor's eyes seemed to be shouting out by themselves before he had even opened his mouth.

LOKI'S STORY 21

"Oh, no! She is *not* coming back with us! You do not get to make a decision like that."

"But I *do*, because it is the only way for us to reap anything from this whole journey. I cannot learn enough of the legends in a matter of a few days. They are numerous and they are very boring. By bringing this woman back with us, on the other hand, I can learn from her everything she knows, at our leisure."

"I would rather leave *you* out here than go along with this," Thor said.

"But, my dear Thor, if you did that, then who would testify to the marvelous tales from our journey together?"

"*Hah!* There has been nothing at all marvelous about this trip," said Thor, no doubt reflecting bitterly on his experiences in the city that they were now in. Thor turned his back on Loki and marched away.

"Yes, there *has*," Loki called after him. "Remember: we met *trolls* on the way over here."

Thor stopped in his tracks and turned around.

"They were descendants of the Jotunns," Loki went on, "and you had to beat them in a game of wits."

"What are you babbling about?"

"Well, they had your hammer, Thor. So, we had to charge into their headquarters to retrieve it. Just imagine that: you *without* your hammer. You would have to

LOKI'S STORY 22

prove yourself, in the face of all those who for years have doubted that you would be able to do anything of the sort without your weapon. Now, the trolls offered you a chance to get it back, only if you completed certain tasks that they set for you.”

“Your story better end in me completing *all* their puny tasks, as if it were drinking water to me, and then getting my hammer back,” Thor snarled.

“Oh, no, Thor; that wouldn't constitute a *story arc*. Trust me, as I am studying these matters, that *no one* would tell that story around. No, you *couldn't* complete the tasks of the trolls, because they were all fixed in the trolls' favor. Each task was designed so that it would be impossible for you to complete it – or *anyone*, for that matter. One of the tasks *was* actually to drink water – from a horn, but that horn was channeled to the ocean, without your awareness, and so it couldn't possibly be emptied. You still gave it your best effort, and in the process you even managed to make the ocean stir.”

Thor frowned.

“Then another task,” Loki went on, “was to lift the trolls' enormous feline up from the ground. A task that you should have been able to take care of easily enough, only this cat could stretch itself out infinitely, so that its feet would never part with the ground.”

LOKI'S STORY 23

“Enough! There shall be no stories about me being fooled by trolls.”

“Odin believes that we need stories that are peculiar enough for people to start telling them around. Now, the ending of this story, which might be more to your liking, dear Thor, is that you *got* your hammer back, simply by slaughtering the creeps who were keeping it from you, using your own hands for the job.”

“So, all their trickery was futile in the end – is that it?”

“Yes! The message behind the story being: *never* to try to outwit the mighty Thor, no matter how clever you feel.”

Thor turned silent. Loki supposed that he was retelling the story to himself in his head.

“And you honestly believe that a story like that would catch on?” Thor asked at length.

“It is every bit as dynamic as anything I’ve heard so far about the Olympians.”

“In that case, I’ll let you bring that woman along – for now. However, if Odin objects to it I will do the job of killing her myself.”

“That’s fair enough, Thor.”



UPON THEIR RETURN to Asgarden, the two Regin discovered that the others there were unlikely to pay much attention to the new addition to their society. The atmosphere was gloomy and everyone was too distracted by some recent occurrence to care. Thor and Loki were summoned to see Odin separately. Loki met with the All-father alone.

“I suppose you must have learned that while you were away our dear Baldur has been slain,” said Odin. “Regin are grieving, so tread lightly,” he added as a warning.

“Good advice,” said Loki, without showing any emotions over the news – being aware that it wouldn’t necessarily be viewed as inappropriate by Odin, as any worthy Regin wouldn’t ever be expected to be overcome with grief, even at the death of someone from within their close circle. “He had made a number of enemies in his private life, poor boy,” Loki went on. “Is it known who was at work?”

“Yes. The culprit has been captured. He shall be made an example of. But also, there should be a poem for Baldur. I thought you would be the right Regin to write it.”

“Who killed him?”

“A man by the name of Hodur.”

LOKI'S STORY 25

"Hodur? I know him; he's blind! Seriously, Odin, couldn't you have come up with a more believable scapegoat? No one will accept this as truth – unless of course their obedience to you has already gone beyond redemption. You still shouldn't take that for granted, Odin. At least people will secretly assume that the truth is something too embarrassing to be revealed, as I'm beginning to suspect myself."

"It was Hodur," Odin shouted. "But if people aren't going to accept that, however true it is, then we may be forced to stretch the truth in order to convince them."

"You mean: to come up with a believable account which involves Baldur being assassinated by a blind man?"

"The purpose of your travels was always to learn the art of creating legends around us, just as fascinating as those of the Olympians. Take this tragedy and make something graceful out of it."

"You burden me with a challenging task, Odin. I'll need to consult my partner on this one."

"Yes," Odin said, the tone of his voice changing from commanding to roguish. "I am aware that you have brought back with you a woman who has no place in our society. Thor was not pleased."

"I explained my reasons to Thor, but I know that it's not exactly a skill of his to keep track of what he has

LOKI'S STORY 26

been told and then alter his outlook on a situation accordingly."

"Both you and your new friend will have this chance to prove your value to us. Come up with a glorious tale of Baldur's death. He was shot down by Hodur – that part cannot be altered."

Back in his own quarters Loki explained the situation to Petra.

"Baldur was an entitled prick," Loki concluded. "He would annoy everyone to no end. It was only a matter of time before someone took care of him. Whoever it was has been covered for, though. Officially it was the work of this blind man. I guess that people here might even eat up whatever version Odin throws at them, but it is up to us to leave Baldur a legacy for the rest of the world; something similar to the stories of the Olympians."

Petra had been sitting hunched on Loki's bed while listening to him, with her arms resting in her lap.

"We have to make it something theatrical then," she said, now flinging her arms around to push herself up on her feet. "Let's say that Baldur was actually the most *beloved* of all the Gods."

"We are Regin, not Gods," Loki remarked.

Petra came all the way up to Loki's face.

"From now on, you are both."

LOKI'S STORY 27

“And if everyone loved Baldur, then who would kill him?” Loki said, taking a step back away from her.

Petra reached for her scarf and then kept it in her hands, waving it in the air as she paced around the room.

“Let’s say that Odin had become wise to the death of Baldur *before* it happened. That sort of *motif* is traditional in the Olympian lore. We can even say that Odin tried to prevent Baldur’s death when he had discovered that it was on the horizon. But then, there was some slight oversight on his part, which Baldur’s only enemy inside of Asgarden was able to take advantage of.”

Loki raised his hand, to cut her off.

“Beware that Odin wouldn’t care to hear about himself making mistakes, any more than Thor liked hearing that tale of himself being fooled by trolls.”

“Of course Odin will.” Petra danced around with her scarf. “Think of all the *effort* that Odin put into preventing Baldur’s death: he travelled all around the world to get everyone to promise not to hurt Baldur – and not just all the people, but every material there is, so that nothing would even *work* on him if anyone attempted to kill him.”

“But then Odin overlooked something?”

LOKI'S STORY 28

“Yes. There would have to be *one* substance that Odin left out; a harmless little plant – like, for instance: *mistletoe*.”

“Mistletoe doesn’t exist in this part of the world,” Loki weighed in. “Our audience here wouldn’t even know if it was a plant at all.”

“But *our audience* is mostly people of the south, no? It might not be a bad idea to include something that will resonate with the commoners over there.”

She waved the scarf in Loki’s face and then playfully laced it around herself from waist to shoulder.

“How about this: after Baldur had become immune to everything, the Gods were celebrating Baldur’s immortality by attacking him with all different kinds of weapons. Nothing could harm him anyway, so the Gods decided to have fun this way – they are a *fun-loving* bunch, aren’t they? Baldur’s only enemy took this opportunity, as he had come to know of the loophole in the pact, regarding the mistletoe. He offered to assist the blind man in taking a shot at Baldur with his bow and arrow – so that Hodur could take part in the celebration and not be left out, whereas his blindness otherwise rendered him unable. Hodur didn’t expect that it would cause any real harm to Baldur, but little did he know that the person assisting him had tied the mistletoe to the arrow, so now Baldur *could* be slain by it.”

“And you think that this tale would appeal to people?”

“Trust me, the tales must be absolutely *nonsensical* for anyone to take them seriously.”

She turned away from Loki and went on waving her scarf into the air.

“But I can’t see Odin being happy with his failure in this story,” said Loki.

“Just to make Odin happy then, we’ll add an appendix about how, even after Baldur’s death, Odin did everything in his power to rescue him. Have you ever heard the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice?”

“If they’re Olympians, Petra, the answer is that I have only heard the ones that you told me.”

“Eurydice died – much like Baldur – and she had been loved by Orpheus, who then travelled to the *Land of the dead* to get her back. That location had already been established in another legend; it’s a realm ruled by *Hades*, the collector of lost souls. A terrifying place, as you can imagine, yet Orpheus heroically went in there to retrieve Eurydice. He came upon the notorious hound, called Cerberus, that guarded the passage to the underworld. Orpheus, being a marvelous musician, managed to soothe the mad beast by playing a tune for it. Hades then agreed to let Orpheus take Eurydice back with him, though on one condition: that *she* would not

LOKI'S STORY 30

look behind her until they had gotten back through the gates and were outside of the underworld. But then she did, without thinking about it, and so she got trapped with Hades for the rest of eternity. Such an idle move, condemning her so completely. All the effort of Orpheus had been in vain.”

“And you think that we should use this same tale here, but replace Eurydice with Baldur, and Orpheus with Odin?”

“We only need to change it up a bit. Let’s leave out the musical part.”

Loki took the story to Odin, who then sat through it patiently, but was quick to express his displeasure at the end of it.

“This will not do! We cannot base our stories on characters and realms from the Olympians. We want to *replace* them, not to become side characters in *their* world!”

“All-father, have reason; we will take the elements from their legends and make them our own. People will get confused; they won’t know where these story elements originated from. We *should* have a land of the dead in our world, where those who die a dishonorable death end up – or, better yet, those who don’t live their lives honoring us Regin. In the afterlife they will be shipped off to this fiery place, which Petra suggests we

should call *Niflhel*, where a serpent hangs above the unfortunate inmates and drips venom onto their helmetless heads. Then the land of the dead needs to have its ruler, who could also be one of the main adversaries of Regin – a worthy one this time, someone who commands a whole legion of *undead*. No more of that *evil wizard* stuff – that's too elementary. You need enemies that are *monsters* – beasts that only Regin stand any chance of fighting against."

"What kind of beasts could they be?" Odin inquired.

"Petra and I have been discussing it amongst ourselves. How about a wolf that originates from a swamp: *Fen-rir*? We could say that the wolf is so powerful that it could take down the entire civilization on his own, were it not for the fact that Regin has already managed to tie it down – but alas, should it ever break free from its fetters, it would wreak havoc upon all those who got in its way.

"Then there could be a giant serpent as well, one that lies on the ocean bed, stretching through all of it. And this serpent would be powerful enough to bring about the *end of the world*, were it not kept down by Regin."

Loki ended it there, but Odin waited silently for him to go on before he then spoke.

LOKI'S STORY 32

“We can discuss these other stories later, but let’s for now stick to the one of Baldur’s death.”



IT WASN'T LONG until Loki was summoned to appear before Odin again. The All-father didn't mention what he had done with the tale of Baldur's death, but merely informed Loki that he wanted *more* – preferably tales that elaborated on the nature of the two monsters: the wolf and the sea-serpent. Loki had already had talks with Petra about it. What they had come up with was that Regin had once approached the wolf Fenrir, after Odin had foreseen that the monster would bring destruction upon the world. Odin had thus presented the wolf with a challenge, wagering that the wolf would be unable to break free from some sturdy bonds after Regin had mounted them on it. If the wolf truly wouldn't, thereby losing the wager, then Odin promised that Regin would untie it. Not entirely trusting Regin, the wolf demanded collateral: one of Regin was to place a hand inside Fenrir's mouth. Should they betray the wolf, by refusing to set it free once it was stuck, then the beast would bite that hand off. Tyr had stepped up to it,

LOKI'S STORY 33

putting his hand between Fenrir's jaws. But then, as the wolf discovered the treachery in Regin's true intention, it snatched off Tyr's hand. Tyr had made a sacrifice, much like Odin once had with his own eye.

Petra and Loki had also come up with a tale about Thor, where he had been rowing in the ocean with a friend, who had taken to mocking Thor for the fact that the Regin of Thunder hadn't been able to catch a single fish. The egging eventually prompted Thor to stand up in the boat and then drag out of the ocean the Sea-serpent itself, merely for the sake of demonstrating his might and to put his mocking fishing partner in his place.

Petra had come up with stories about creatures that were in allegiance with Odin. She had determined that the All-father would constantly be escorted by two ravens and a couple of wolfs – in pairs as if to contrast Odin's one remaining eye. The ravens served as Odin's spies; he had become able to speak to them from having had that drink from the Well of Infinite Wisdom. Whenever people would see ravens flying around, they couldn't be sure that they weren't Odin's servants.

Odin listened enthusiastically to every fabrication that Loki presented him with, each time with at least two servants at his side to write them down. Aside from that, Odin didn't express any appreciation for Loki's

labor, yet it seemed evident that the All-father was pleased and that he would send his servants on journeys, merely to tell the new tales around.



IT HAD BEEN A WHILE since Odin had last summoned Loki, and it seemed as if the All-father considered Regin's mythology to be complete. When Loki was eventually sent for by Odin, he expected requests for new stories and figured that the All-father's appetite for praising tales had awoken anew. As it turned out, on this occasion Odin merely wanted to notify Loki of an upcoming feast in Asgarden.

"You are invited," Odin said, "but that woman that you brought here some months ago is not."

"The woman *that I brought here?* How ungrateful of you, Odin. The one you speak of is the *muse* that has graced you with those protective tales that you once deemed so essential to your reign. Now you wish to deny her of your hospitality?"

"I have been hospitable enough, letting her reside here in peace, Loki. Need I remind you that she is not Regin?"

"She has been in your service for long enough, though."

"Or so you claim. In reality I have no ties to her. If she has chosen to make up stories about us, out of her own desire, that still doesn't make her entitled, or me indebted to her."

"You are still trying to keep it a secret, are you? The service she has done for you."

"Leave the matter right there, Loki, and accept that she is not welcome at our feast. However, I will allow her to go on residing in Asgarden with you."



THE FEAST of Asgarden featured a variety of big game, all of its rarities at the table and yet they were made to come off as commonplace on this occasion, to the eyes of the outsiders who had come. It was in line with everything else about the arrangement: underneath the exterior of Regin being sociable and friendly with the attendees, there was a hidden, rigid ritual, set up to give a specific impression to the outsiders. Loki thought back to the festivities that he had entered with Thor in one of the cities during their travels south, where even

LOKI'S STORY 36

the Regin of Thunder had ended up joining the commoners in their blissfully drunken state. Now, in contrast, he was on his best behavior, as was everyone else who counted. None of Regin would want to let loose under the watchful eye of the All-father. That sort of behavior would be fitting only for the lower segments. Regin ate and drank, while telling stories of each other that everyone had already heard – at least a hundred times at this point. There was no mentioning of their newly acquired legends, whether that was because Regin and the other guests were unaware of them, or if they had determined that bringing up the tales was yet too risky, as most had not been informed on how they had come about in the first place.

It was with all this in mind that Loki got up to give his toast to the crowd.

“My fellow Regin; what a remarkable assembly this is. A finer one there could not be.”

“*Hear, hear,*” sounded the crowd.

“But, of course, it is not just *we* who are celebrating these days. I have it on high authority that the people of the distant south are celebrating as well, and *they* are celebrating *us!*”

This reaped uproar of laughter.

“Tales of our glory have reached them and now,” Loki went on shouting over the crowd, “while we toast

LOKI'S STORY 37

to our own health, they are toasting to *our* health as well!"

The crowd erupted. Loki waited patiently for the clamor to die out before going on.

"That is what we call: conquering *without* bloodshed."

At once, the crowd turned almost completely silent, everyone seemingly becoming pensive over the words. *Unsurprisingly*, to Loki, as the only kind of conquest that was still acknowledged and revered was exactly *through battle*. Yet the unwelcoming reaction that his last comment had met with only served to encourage Loki further to go on.

"We will not have to go up against the Olympians with our fists, swords and hammers. We have gained our respect as their betters through made-up stories!"

The cheering had ceased completely.

"Baldur died, and a blind man got blamed. The southerners all believe that Baldur was the *God of Light*, the most beloved of all of us Regin; that before his untimely death, Odin had negotiated with every substance in the known universe, getting them all to agree not to let any harm come to Baldur. All save but one: a harmless little plant, the mistletoe – and why would he? It doesn't even *grow* in this part of the world! But Baldur still ended up getting killed by this plant. A

tragic accident, all because Regin had been playing this harmless little game of *trying* to kill Baldur. Tell me, good crowd, is this really the kind of story we *want* people to believe about us?"

"That's enough out of you, you fool!" shouted Odin.

The crowd reacted as if struck as a whole, hushed by Odin's rage.

Loki turned to him.

"A *fool*, you call me? Why, of course; fools are known to speak the truth that no one else dares voice. Fools are essential to the order of society in that way. The service they provide is cathartic. While you lot remain burdened by thoughts that you can never allow yourself to voice out-loud, keeping them hammering inside your skulls, only the fool does you the service of putting them into spoken words. The fool is therefore your hero, essential to the survival of your hypocrisy. You mark my words, that the day will come when a fool will be instated as your ruler."

"Loki, you are drunk," Odin said. "You have embarrassed yourself and all of us. Cease your toast this instance."

"Odin, you who drank that elixir and had to give up an eye for it – yes, *that one* you came up with

yourself, didn't you? Or was it perhaps the ingenious invention of your companion with the big hammer?"

"That's enough!" Thor now shouted out. "*You* will get hammered, Loki!"

Loki saw Thor advance towards him, and he appeared to be joined by others who quickly got up from their chairs as Thor moved past them. Loki could tell that there would be no reasoning with the Regin of Thunder. So he sprinted away.

Behind him he could hear the mirth that his cowardice towards the enraged Thor brought out. Having publicly shamed Odin, Loki could expect no mercy from Thor, and there would be no one to hold him back.



LOKI HAD WORKED OUT his plans in his mind before reaching his cottage. He would get Petra to run off with him. Together, they would abandon Asgarden and travel the world freely; eventually returning – perhaps – when the rage against them had settled.

LOKI'S STORY 40

But Petra wasn't waiting for Loki at home. Where she could have gone off to he couldn't imagine. Loki circled the cottage and then ran away from it to call her name out into the open. He got no response, except for the rising clamor of the enraged mob that was coming for him. Loki was left with no choice but to move on by himself.

He got out of Asgarden and headed south, in the direction of the village that he had been to with Thor on that one journey that they had taken together. Loki was under no impression that it would be safe, should Thor come over there to look for him, seeing as how the whole community was bound in eternal submission towards the Regin of Thunder. But it could be that that was where Petra had gone to, should she have moved south herself.

Loki had to account for the possibility that Thor had managed to get there before him. But when Loki arrived to the village, the ease at which the townspeople went about their ways seemed to be a definite enough indication that they'd had no visits from Thor that day. Loki went up to a group of street performers and described Petra to them, then asking them if they had noticed her. They merely shook their heads and went on with their business. Loki went on asking everyone who entered his path, but no one recalled seeing Petra, yet

they wouldn't claim with any certainty that they *hadn't* either and that motivated Loki to go on looking.

"I know you," said a stranger as Loki approached him. Loki eventually recognized him as the blacksmith that he had met when he was there with Thor. "You are friends with Thor, aren't you?"

"Yes. And I need your help."

He described Petra to the man and asked him if he had possibly noticed her there recently.

"No, but give my regards to Thor."

It seemed to Loki that the best thing for him to do would be to stay in this village, as Petra might still cross it. And with all the people that Loki had asked, someone was bound to recognize her and then let her know that he was there looking for her. Thor and his mob might not come after him all this way.

Loki got a room at the inn, and for the remainder of the day he stayed inside it, contemplating. It was possible that Petra hadn't gotten out of Asgarden at all. It could be that Regin had caught her already. What would they do with her? Loki terminated the thought before his imagination had taken off with it.

When someone eventually arrived to the village to look for Loki, abundance of bystanders were willing to volunteer the information that he had approached them, but, as it happened, it wasn't Petra. Thor was in town,

LOKI'S STORY 42

and as it was instantly evident at the sight of him that he had some urgent matter to attend to, everyone in his path turned into his obedient servant.

Loki's revelation came with a crowd gathering outside the inn, right below the window to his room. Loki resorted to climbing out through the window, and heaving himself up onto the roof. He was able to make his way down a wall on the other side of the house. But this way he had still only just gained a few steps on the ravenous crowd.

Loki saw the woodlands within his reach. There among the trees, he would have a better chance of passing unnoticed. But someone reached for his ankle and tripped him. Loki tried to sprint up again, but was immediately pinned down by three men, and there were more joining them from behind.

The crowd opened up, forming a pathway that the All-father and Thor then came walking along.

"We're taking you somewhere remote, Loki," Odin commanded. "Where you will have your *trial*."



THE TRIAL was held deep in the woods, under a tall tree that Loki suspected was meant to play some part in the proceedings. It seemed unlikely that he would be given a chance to defend himself at all, as he was being pinned down by the three men, and right next to them stood Thor, ready to step in if Loki somehow managed to overpower them.

"Loki," Odin spoke out. "You stand accused of treachery against Regin."

Loki yanked his head up in the direction of Odin.

"Tell me, what do I stand accused of, Odin? I demand to hear it," he snarled.

Odin remained still as a statue, with his gaze set on Loki, making it evident that he would not rush at Loki's insistence.

"You are responsible for the death of Baldur," Odin let out at last.

Loki felt that he was overcome, not so much with fear but by the sheer absurdity of the situation. He burst out laughing.

"Baldur was killed by Hodur, the blind man. You *decided* so yourself. And you know full well that I was nowhere near Asgarden at the time."

"Hodur wasn't alone responsible for Baldur's death. As you have repeatedly pointed out yourself, he had a handicap that rendered him inapt. He was aided

and tricked by someone in disguise. Though it is true that no one *noticed* you on the grounds on the day of Baldur's demise, that does not mean that you were not there in a costume. Yes, Loki, we now know that *you* are the evil wizard who has been taunting us for so long, working your way against us from our own midst."

"I was working *for* you, Odin! Admit it now in front of these witnesses."

At a signal given by Odin nodding his head, Loki was pinned down with exceeding force by the men who had already been holding him down. Odin went on in a calm manner.

"You condemn yourself with your words, Loki."

"Where is Petra?" Loki asked, meekly, without looking up from the ground this time.

"She is no longer in Asgarden, and she is of no interest to us. But Loki, *you* are Regin's greatest traitor. And you shall be punished accordingly. Like the wolf Fenrir, you shall be tied to the ground and left here helpless. Like the sufferers of the afterlife in Niflhel – those who went against Regin during their lifetime – you shall spend the remainder of your days under the gaping mouth of a venomous serpent. It will now be placed on a branch above your head, and its service to us will be to dispense its poison onto your body."

Thor was handed the serpent in question, which went limp as a rag in his grip. Somehow the sluggish creature had been drained of all motivation and instinct, appearing unlikely to move by itself at all. The three men who had been holding Loki down were now joined by three others, and together the group tied Loki to the ground. Meanwhile, Thor attached the snake to the nearest branch of the tree. There it remained suspended, gapping down, as if in obedience to Regin, but more likely it was due to the horrendous, semi-animated state that Regin had somehow left it in.

Once it was all set up Loki turned his head again to Odin, and caught the smile that had crept up on the All-father's face.

"So, you see, Loki, the legends have come true after all, but not exactly in the way you envisioned."

The whole crowd moved away from Loki, now that he had become fixed to the ground by his hands and feet.

"This is *goodbye* now, Loki," Odin said. "A sad affair, but you will serve as an example to those who dare defy us and go against us."

Odin turned around and walked away. The others followed him like a human shadow. As Loki had expected, Odin had not offered him to have any final words.



THE SNAKE looked less than menacing, even with its perpetual grin and gaping mouth, where it stayed fixed on the branch exactly the way that Thor had left it, looking closer to death than life. The sight sparked hope in Loki that the snake would expire before he did. But then he saw the saliva accumulating from its lips, gradually being pulled down by its own weight. It fell and landed on Loki's forehead, causing a sharp pain, as if a needle was being dug into his skull. Then, with every passing breath, the pain grew more intensifying, as the poison stayed in its place, with Loki being unable to wipe it off. He tried to shake it away, but to no avail. It stayed on his forehead and slowly branded itself deeper into his skin. If this happened often enough, the pool of poison would end up peeling the skin off his skull.

Loki thought he was seeing the poison coming down from the snake's mouth for the second time, and he began to move around vehemently to get out of its way, at the same time trying to keep his eyes on the mouth. But nothing came down. It had been a trick of the eye – yet now it seemed to be coming for real. Loki flung himself around some more, but the poison didn't

fall this time either. Again it had been an illusion. Loki was tiring himself out by trying to dodge the venom, and it wasn't even arriving. Then eventually it came, and landed on the back of his head, running down between his shoulder blades. Loki tossed so violently that he tore his arm, with a crushing pain in the shoulder that ended up being even more overpowering than the burning saliva before.

Any hope of his that the snake would die before Loki had now left him. He was surely going to *melt* from all the poison that came in turns down on his skin. He wanted to stop fighting it, to die with the little dignity he had left, but the movements of his limbs came spontaneously every time he felt the liquid landing on him.

He had no idea of how long he had been there, or how long it could be until the poison eventually terminated him. He heard footsteps on the grass. A spectator was coming. One of his tormentors returning for a look.

He looked up and saw Petra, approaching him cautiously. Before he had been captured, Loki had been going around looking for her; now he could see that she was unharmed, yet the sight didn't serve to raise his spirits.

LOKI'S STORY 48

He hadn't realized how deep his feelings ran until he addressed her and what came out of his mouth was an accusation. "I was looking for *you*. They caught me when I was going around trying to find you."

Petra looked at the snake and kept her distance from the two of them.

"They came for me while you were away on that feast," she said.

"How could they have gotten there before me?" Loki breathed out.

"They arrived shortly after you left. I think they were going to use the opportunity of you being away to make me disappear."

"And you disappeared."

"I *had to*, Loki. I didn't stand a chance against any of them on my own, but..."

She turned silent. Loki had to use all of his remaining strength just to turn his head up to face her.

"You should say what you came here to say and then leave, before the poison hits me again."

"I never told you," she said, "but there is a legion of warriors who have been preparing a rebellion against Regin. Your exclusion from Asgarden has prompted them to move forward, as we speak. They are willing to rescue you, but only if you help them take charge into Asgarden."

“They will have to get here fast.”

Without saying another word, Petra turned and ran away.

The next time Loki heard footsteps approach they were numerous, a march coming his way.



DESPITE HIS FRAIL STATE, Loki was treated as a commander by the warriors who had freed him. They set up camp in the woods and there they brought Loki new clothes. He was given a couple of days to recover. Petra kept her distance from him, and Loki assumed that she was giving him space so that he could gather enough energy to fulfil the role that was expected of him, to lead the invasion into Asgarden.

When it took place it didn't require much effort from Loki. The warriors were disciplined and focused, acting as one. Loki had only to provide them with the details on which would be the best way to get in. He gave them a thorough description of the land and its structure. It was merely acting on that information that the rebels got inside and managed to do critical damage to Regin, who hardly managed to defend themselves at

LOKI'S STORY 50

all. Loki mostly stood by and observed. He would have preferred to take a more active part in the battle, but the leader of the legion had said that he considered Loki to be too important to have his life taken in a face-to-face combat with one of their adversaries.

Loki didn't get to witness the battle against Thor, but was told how it had gone down, of how Thor had fought with his hammer and managed to hold off the invaders, even take down a few of them. But then fatigue had taken its toll on him, with each strike becoming feebler. He couldn't sustain the fight for as long as all those who were up against him, who carried lighter weapons. They managed to tire Thor enough so that then they could move in and kill him. The Regin of Thunder was no more.

Odin had been trapped inside his palace, but for him, Loki had made a request to the invaders of getting a chance to confront the All-father in person. Odin's guards had all been killed or captured and he stood alone as Loki came walking towards him.

"Well, well, Odin. Just like you led Regin into Asgarden against the Jotunns, I have now led these southerners in here against you. So, you see, we are the same, and yet we are opposites."

Odin looked up at him with his one remaining eye.

"Loki," he growled. "You *are* a traitor to the Regin."

"Only now, I am. However, treachery against people who have already left you to die a torturous death out in the woods hardly counts as treachery at all, does it?"

"We knew that it would come to this before we captured you. It had been foretold."

"Why, of course; just like in your legends, my dear Odin. You should have designed a quicker death for me in that case. Yet you wanted me to suffer. Your sadism got the better of you. I could have you treated in the same fashion, of course. But instead, I have requested that you get to walk away from all this. The invaders will allow you to leave."

"This is a trick!"

"No. No trickery. If you let me finish: you can walk away from this battle; you only have to go through *me*."

Loki raised his sword.

"That hardly counts as an obstacle, does it? Me against the All-father, and I never amounted to anything, did I?"

Odin raised his own sword.

"Is that what you wish? Do you wish to die at my hands, Loki?"

"That's certainly what it would sound like to anyone who is foolish enough to buy into your reputation. But I know better, of course. I know that you

are merely an aged man with one eye. You have made it an easy claim to fame to go against you in a battle of swords, to inherit your glory, by slaying the all-mighty All-father."

"I may be old and one-eyed, but I swear, by all the lives of Regin that you have taken today, that I will slay you, Loki."

And with that, Odin charged at him. After only a brief exchange of blows with their swords, Loki ran his weapon into Odin's chest. He fell to the floor. Loki hesitated before he then charged again, to remove Odin's head.



AFTER THE BATTLE, Loki moved back into his old cottage in Asgarden. He had now become a part of the presiding clan, as the one remaining Regin. There he lived with Petra, who still occasionally took trips to the south. No one had asked either of them to make up stories about the new rulers.

One time when Petra came back from the south she informed Loki that she had learned that the legends of Regin were still going around.

LOKI'S STORY 53

“But they have taken on a life of their own since Regin were destroyed,” she said. “You have become a prominent part of them. The tales have now incorporated you being tied down in the forest, with the serpent over your head. But they also claim that you *were* the evil wizard that Odin made you out to be, and that you could morph into your disguises with little effort. You were in allegiance with the Jotunns, and you were father to the wolf Fenrir and the Sea-serpent.”

“Well, that part, at least, is surprisingly accurate,” Loki remarked.

“Now it is believed that Regin foresaw that you would go against them, and at your side there would be the wolf and the serpent. And that was why they had to tie you down, you see. But then somehow you broke free, as well as the wolf, and that led to the final battle.”

“And how did the final battle go down?” asked Loki.

“With *everyone* perishing in the battlefield. I guess we have a lot of work on our hands correcting these misbeliefs.”

“Let the stories stay as they are,” he whispered to her. “I’m not in the mind to go chasing my own shadow. As long as the people know that Regin was defeated. We should give it a name: Ragna-rökkur – *the nightfall of Regin.*”

Author's notes

With all the distortion of Norse mythology that comes up in this story, there is one instance that I feel I should address specially, as, although it is every bit as much a matter of interpretation as anything else in the story, I may have implied that it was a clear-cut translation of the original text, with the opening quotation from *Völuspá*. However, the most popular interpretation of the verse “festur mun slitna, en freki renna,” is not “bonds will break, fire will spread” but actually “bonds will break, the wolf will run.” These lines that come up two to three times (depending on the version) in the poem of the Norse gods, much like a main chorus, have thus been interpreted as referring to the wolf Fenrir running free (or possibly the dog called Garmur, which is mentioned in the previous line of the same verse, although that theory seems to be less popular). Since Fenrir's freedom, along with Loki's, is synonymous with Ragnarök it seems reasonable that this recurring line would be referring to the wolf running free, thus indicating that the end is near. Aside from that, the notion of the word 'freki' meaning 'wolf' seems mostly to be supported by the fact that Óðin has a wolf with that name. However, the word *frekur* (an adjective that

LOKI'S STORY 55

still means *demanding* in modern-day Icelandic, and can become *freki*, depending on the sentence structure) then comes up in another poem, *Alvismál*, where it is mentioned as being a word used for *fire* in the language of the Jotunns. As Loki is supposedly a descendant of Jotunns, and his name already means 'flame', the possibility that 'freki mun renna' is meant to be understood as 'fire will spread' rather than "wolf will run" is, to me, a much more charming symbolism, and a more obvious meaning, than the traditional interpretation of the verse. Undeniably, Loki's freedom signifies that fire is about to spread through the whole world of the Nordic gods.