



THE BUILDING OF THE WALL

CAST

ODIN	<i>All-Father of the Gods</i>
LOKI	<i>Half-god, Half-giant</i>
FREY	<i>God of the Vanir Tribe</i>
FREYA	<i>Goddess of Love and Beauty</i>
HEIMDALL	<i>Watchman of the Gods</i>
TYR	<i>God of Single Combat</i>
THOR	<i>God of Thunder</i>
BALDER	<i>Most Beloved of the Gods</i>
FRIGGA	<i>Wife of Odin</i>
GIANT	<i>Mysterious Builder</i>
SVADILFARE	<i>Gigantic Horse</i>

NARRATOR: Odin, the All-Father of the Æsir, stared silently at the smoking ruins that had once been Asgard, the home of the gods. High-roofed halls now lay in blackened heaps. The once-powerful wall had been beaten down to a line of jagged nubs, and the surrounding meadow was charred from battle.

A great crowd of gods stood around Odin—looking to him for guidance.

ODIN: (*grimly*) So passes our home. All we worked for these many years—gone.

NARRATOR: The Æsir had been caught up in a violent war against another powerful tribe of gods, the Vanir. Lightning bolts had been hurled, mountains broken down, the very roots of the World Tree had been shaken, but at last, the conflict had ended, and the two tribes had made an uneasy peace—but not before Asgard had been completely destroyed.

Balder, the most beloved of the gods, stepped forward and smiled hopefully as he addressed his aged father.

BALDER: Iduna says that her magical apple orchard has not been harmed by the fires.

NARRATOR: The apples that the goddess Iduna grew in her orchard were what kept the gods from aging.

BALDER: All hope is not lost. We can rebuild Asgard.

ODIN: Rebuild? What's the use? Why rebuild when it will only be destroyed again?

NARRATOR: Another of Odin's sons, Tyr, a dark-haired warrior-god, pointed his sword toward the broken wall.

TYR: We must have better defenses. In our next home, Father, the walls must be solid. A fortress with weak walls is no fortress at all.

ODIN: But our beautiful halls are nothing but ash.

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NARRATOR: Thor, the God of Thunder, raised his fist into the air.

THOR: Father, just as we crushed the Vanir, we will rebuild these halls! And we will build you a golden hall that will have no rival!

(shouts of agreement from the gods)

NARRATOR: Heimdall, a burly, bearded god, held his growling stomach.

HEIMDALL: But please, Father, not before we have had some dinner!

TYR: Heimdall! You are always thinking with your stomach! Don't you care that we're now homeless?

HEIMDALL: Homeless or not—I'm still hungry!

NARRATOR: Odin began to smile but thought better of it.

ODIN: Very well. We will rebuild. But for Heimdall's sake, we will feast first.

NARRATOR: Heimdall grinned ear-to-ear—revealing his dazzling rows of golden teeth. Frigga, Odin's stately wife, led the other gods in a search for food among the ruins.

FRIGGA: The livestock must have fled in the battle.

NARRATOR: Thor raised a triumphant cry.

THOR: Ha! Here is an unlucky goat who met his end! Thor likes a good goat leg! Start a fire.

HEIMDALL: Now all we need is—

NARRATOR: Tyr raised a blackened barrel from a pile of debris.

TYR: *(triumphantly)* A barrel of mead!

THOR: Ha-ha! Let the feast begin!

NARRATOR: In the circle of debris that had once been the hall of the gods, the Æsir feasted. As Thor munched on a roasted goat-leg, he paused thoughtfully.

THOR: *(mouthful)* Father, there are so many different creatures that live in the Nine Worlds—Æsir gods, Vanir gods, frost giants, wind giants, elves, men, and dwarves. Where did we all come from? And the Nine Worlds themselves? What made them?

TYR: *(sarcastically)* There is a topic for some light dinner conversation—what is the meaning of life?

NARRATOR: Thor ignored his brother's remark.

THOR: I only ask, Father, because you're the oldest among us. If you're not old enough to remember how it all started, who is?

ODIN: *(annoyed)* Luckily, I have kept my memory in my old age! Yes, I was there at the beginning, and I saw all these things come to pass. But if I told you how it all happened, you wouldn't believe me.

THOR: Try us. It cannot be as strange as all that.

ODIN: Very well. *(pause)* As you know, the Nine Worlds are supported by the branches

of the World Tree. But the World Tree did not always exist. Like any other tree, it had to grow. There was a time when all of this was—different.

TYR: I smell a long story coming on.

ODIN: In the beginning, there were only two things: fire and ice, floating in the midst of the wide gap of nothingness. And when these two things came together, they made—

HEIMDALL: Steam!

NARRATOR: Odin furrowed his bushy eyebrows.

ODIN: (*grumbling*) You are correct, Heimdall, but don't interrupt me again. From this mist came the first two creatures—Ymir the first frost giant and the Great Cow.

THOR: (*confused*) Great Cow?

TYR: Perhaps you should go more slowly, Father. Thor is having trouble keeping up.

THOR: (*defensively*) I am not! Continue with the story!

ODIN: As I was saying, Ymir the giant lived from the milk of the Great Cow. Losing her precious fluid, the Great Cow became thirsty, so she began to lick the ice to quench her thirst.

NARRATOR: The younger gods looked to one another in confusion.

ODIN: As the Great Cow licked the ice, a figure emerged. Slowly, lick by lick—appearing a bit at a time—came my father, and he was the first of the gods.

BALDER: (*thoughtfully*) Hmm. Licked into existence by a cow. How interesting.

NARRATOR: Frigga smiled at her young son reassuringly and patted his head.

FRIGGA: It is true. Now, sweetheart, chew your meat more carefully. Small bites.

THOR: If there was only one male god and one male giant, where did more gods and giants come from?

ODIN: It was a magical time—one your generation can barely understand. But to answer your question, Ymir's children, the other frost giants, were born from his armpit.

NARRATOR: Heimdall nearly spewed his mead.

HEIMDALL: (*snickering*) Born from his armpit! I bet they were stinky children! Hee hee!

TYR: Heimdall, I'm surprised you weren't born from an armpit.

HEIMDALL: (*laughing*) Ha! Yeah! (*pause*) Hey! Wait a minute...

ODIN: Continuing...then my father mated with a she-giant. From this union came my brothers and I.

THOR: (*angrily*) Grrrr. I hate giants!

BALDER: Yes, Thor, but you weren't listening. All gods are part-giant.

THOR: Not me! I'm *all* god!

TYR: (*sigh*) Just continue with the story.

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ODIN: As you know the giants have always been our mortal foes, and the conflict between our people and theirs started way back then. Jealousy fueled it, and we gods warred against Ymir and his children. It was a mighty fight. In the end, the giants fled, and Ymir lay dead.

TYR: Ah-ha! The gods won! As they always do!

ODIN: Yes, we had won, but there was still no world in which creatures of good could live. So from Ymir's body, we formed one. Working together, we took the giant's flesh and ground it into dirt. His blood flowed out and made the oceans, rivers, and lakes. His bones became stone, and we fluffed his brains until they lifted from the earth and became the clouds. The high dome of his skull formed the sky.

NARRATOR: The gods had stopped their meal. They were all staring at one another with disgusted looks.

THOR: You mean, we live in the corpse of a filthy, stinking giant?

HEIMDALL: I think I've lost my appetite.

ODIN: Oh, you young ones understand nothing! It was a beautiful thing! Anyway, Yggdrasil—the World Tree—grew from his body along with the new worlds. One was made for dwarves, one was made for men...

THOR: Where did *those* creatures come from?

ODIN: Well, the dwarves came from the maggots that had infested the body of the frost giant.

TYR: That's fitting. Dwarves are almost as disgusting as giants!

ODIN: And the first man and woman, Ask and Embla, were formed from two trees.

FRIGGA: Which explains man's hard-headedness!

ODIN: Anyway, the last addition—the crown of it all—was Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge, connecting our world to the world of men.

HEIMDALL: (*excitedly*) Ah! The Rainbow Bridge! A lovely spot! I go there every night, you know.

ODIN: Really? Why is that?

HEIMDALL: I cannot sleep at night. I have excellent ears, you know. The sound of the grass growing keeps me awake. So I go there and use my far-sight to look down into the other worlds of the Great Tree. It helps me collect my thoughts. It's quite—*transcendent*.

NARRATOR: The gods stared at Heimdall. These were strange words to come from the oafish god.

HEIMDALL: What? I like it there!

ODIN: Since you spend so much time there, we should have you guard it. While we build, you will be our watchman. It will do little good for us to rebuild Asgard if it's destroyed again by our enemies.

HEIMDALL: Gladly!

ODIN: My story is complete. Perhaps now you see why we must always keep an eye on Jotunheim, the land of the frost giants.

They have never forgotten that we killed their ancestor, and they are ever seeking revenge for that deed. (*pause*) Now, let us build.

NARRATOR: And build they did. Odin controlled the clouds giving a respite from the wind and rain. As his father had suggested, Heimdall journeyed to Bifrost and kept watch for enemies. Tyr and Thor led the other gods in fashioning a great hall for each god and goddess. The greatest and most magnificent hall was reserved for Odin himself. It was called Valhalla, and it towered over the others—its shining roof thatched with golden shields. Frigga organized the goddesses, who spent their time spinning tapestries to hang in the halls. Balder, with the help of Iduna, planted trees and gardens to beautify the surroundings. Odin watched all of this progress with his wise eyes. At last, the new home of the gods was completed.

ODIN: Asgard is remade!

BALDER: It's perfect.

TYR: Ahem. Not quite *perfect* yet.

ODIN: What do you mean?

TYR: We have no wall.

ODIN: You are right. We need a wall—a taller and thicker wall—one that will hold firm. There has to be some skill in it. I won't see Asgard destroyed again! Send for Heimdall!

NARRATOR: Heimdall was sent for and soon arrived, grinning goldenly.

ODIN: Heimdall, we need a wall—a strong wall—one built with magic and cunning. As

the watchman you look down into the other worlds. Have you seen any creature capable of building us such a wall?

HEIMDALL: The dwarves? I have seen that they are excellent craftsmen!

ODIN: No, no. They think only of jewels and gold. We need stone.

HEIMDALL: Hmmm. I will go to the Rainbow Bridge and watch.

ODIN: Then go! And report back when you find us our builder.

NARRATOR: Not many days afterward, the Æsir were feasting in Valhalla when Heimdall interrupted them. He was escorting a handsome youth and a shining maiden.

HEIMDALL: Father! I found these two trying to cross the Rainbow Bridge! They're Vanir gods!

FRIGGA: What beautiful children!

TYR: Enemies!

BALDER: Let them speak for themselves. Maybe they are friends!

FREY: I am Frey, and this is my sister Freya. It's true. We are from the tribe of the Vanir, but we come in peace. We heard that you rebuilt your halls here, and we are sent with a message from all our kin. They regret our former conflict, and never again will the Vanir war against you.

ODIN: This is good news—if it is true.

NARRATOR: Freya, the Vanir maiden, removed her muddied traveling cloak. Her

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beauty was so great that it stung the god's eyes. Only Odin could bear to look at her full glory.

FREYA: (*humbly*) As a sign of peace, we wish to reside here with you—with the Æsir—forever.

TYR: Convenient! Some of the Vanir—our enemies—want to live among us! Why? So you can spy on us?

FREY: The Vanir tribe lost as much as you in our conflict. We are ready for peace. If you do not believe me, here!

NARRATOR: He pulled his shining sword from his belt. The Æsir all moved for their weapons. (*murmuring from the gods*) But Frey turned the sword's handle toward Odin and offered it up to him.

FREY: Here is my sword—if you wish it.

ODIN: A noble gesture! But that won't be necessary. Keep your mighty blade. You two are most welcome! Join our ranks!

NARRATOR: The two Vanir smiled, and the Æsir let up a cheer. (*cheering from the gods*) Only Heimdall grimaced—somewhat miffed he had not caught two Vanir spies. Then suddenly his ears began to twitch.

HEIMDALL: Wait! What's that? I hear someone or *something* sneaking up the Rainbow Bridge! I knew I shouldn't have left my post!

TYR: (*sarcastically*) Are you sure it's not the sound of the grass growing?

HEIMDALL: Argh! I'll be back! And I'll bring the trespasser with me!

NARRATOR: The gods began their feasting anew—finding a place among the festivities for Frey and Freya. (*crashing sounds*) Soon the hall doors burst open, and Heimdall appeared again, struggling to keep a grip on the captive he carried in his burly arms.

HEIMDALL: (*to Loki*) Stop struggling! (*yelling*) Here is the trespasser! Now this one has to be a spy!

LOKI: (*yelling*) Let me go! Let me go!

NARRATOR: Heimdall dragged his skinny prisoner the length of Valhalla and threw him down at Odin's feet.

HEIMDALL: I don't know what this creature is. He looks like some sort of god, but he smells like a giant!

LOKI: (*moaning*) Mercy, mighty gods! Mercy! What have I done to deserve this kind of treatment?

ODIN: We'll ask the questions! Who are you, strange creature?

LOKI: (*moaning*) I am doomed! I expected to find hospitality here in Asgard! I hoped to find some shelter here—from the cruelty of the Nine Worlds!

ODIN: Answer my question, creature! Who or what are you?

LOKI: Oh, great Odin, I am Loki. My mother was one of your kind, and my father was a wind giant.

TYR: A half-breed giant!

THOR: What? A giant! You are lucky this is a place of peace, or I'd crack your head

open! Giants are not welcome here! Jotunheim is their home!

LOKI: Why do you think I came here? The giants won't accept me either! I'm an outcast!

ODIN: Asgard is a place of safety for *friends*. But we are very careful here to accept friends—especially those who are giant-born.

LOKI: Friend! Yes, I am a friend!

ODIN: Everyone who resides here at Asgard has a use and a purpose. What can you do for us?

LOKI: (*helpfully*) I'm full of tricks, your majesty! Not evil tricks, but good ones! Let me show you!

NARRATOR: There was a flash of light in the hall, and where Loki had once stood there was nothing.

HEIMDALL: (*enraged*) Argh! I knew it! He has vanished! He must have transformed a hundred times on me when I dragged him here—but I held on!

LOKI: Buzzzzzzzz. I'm *here*, you meathead!

NARRATOR: Heimdall looked down upon his shoulder, to where a horsefly perched. Its face looked very much like Loki's.

LOKI: (*small voice*) See? I'm very handy—good at spying, too!

HEIMDALL: He confesses it! He is a spy!

NARRATOR: The buzzing of Loki grew so loud that it reverberated from every wall.

There was a flash, and Loki stood in his original form before the throne.

LOKI: Oh, please, Odin! Please!

ODIN: Hmm. Very well. You may stay in Asgard. We may find a use for you yet. You must always struggle to overcome that giant blood of yours. Your father was of the enemy, and part of him is left in you.

NARRATOR: Thor eyed Loki coldly.

THOR: I'll be watching you, giant-scum. Slip up and your head will be mine.

NARRATOR: Loki was allowed to remain among the gods, but they treated him with suspicion. It was not a week later when Heimdall escorted yet another stranger into Asgard.

HEIMDALL: Make way! This time I have done it! I have found a builder—a builder for our wall!

NARRATOR: The stranger was quite a sight. He was as tall as tree, yet spindly like a reed. His body was swathed in a concealing cloak, and a large hat covered his face. Heimdall led him before the throne of Odin.

ODIN: Heimdall, who is this?

HEIMDALL: A builder! Just look at him!

GIANT: Lord of the Æsir, I have heard from your watchman here that you are in need of a stonemason. I am the one you seek.

NARRATOR: Odin eyed the stranger suspiciously.

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ODIN: Asgard needs a wall around it—a wall strong enough to withstand the giants of Jotunheim. Why are you suited for such a job?

GIANT: I swear by all my ancestors that I can build a wall tall enough and strong enough to withstand even the mightiest of gods and giants. I know secret spells—spells of binding—that could make it impenetrable.

ODIN: I see. But tell me, what is your price for such a project?

GIANT: You will give me six months. If I cannot complete the wall by summer, you will owe me nothing.

ODIN: But if you do...

GIANT: But if I do...you must give me Sol and Mani—the sun and the moon.

(murmuring among the gods)

ODIN: *(coolly)* The sun and the moon, huh? Is that all? *(laugh)* Your terms are ridiculous.

GIANT: *And* I want this female as my bride.

NARRATOR: The stranger pointed a knobby finger toward Freya, the Vanir maiden.

(murmuring among the gods)

FREYA: Me?

FREY: Never! You'll never get my sister!

NARRATOR: Frey rose and drew his sword.

GIANT: Fine. But know this—there is no one else among all the creatures of the Nine Worlds who could build a wall like I can.

ODIN: Leave us, stranger! We must discuss your offer.

NARRATOR: The stranger turned and left the hearing hall.

TYR: Father, this is not a good idea! That stranger is obviously a giant in disguise!

ODIN: Of course! Anyone but a complete idiot would know he was a giant!

THOR: *(in shock)* What? He was a giant? Here in Asgard?

ODIN: *(sarcastically)* I rest my case. Who else but a giant would ask for such an insane price for his work?

BALDER: What a horrible request! We'd have our wall, but without the sun and moon the world would be in darkness forever!

LOKI: Not necessarily.

NARRATOR: The creature Loki was lurking in the shadows of the hall. All the gods turned toward him.

ODIN: What do you mean?

LOKI: Not even a giant can build a massive wall in a year!

ODIN: How can you be so sure?

LOKI: It's impossible. He'll try and fail—and then you will have your wall. And who better to build a wall to keep giants out than a giant himself? Giants are the masters of

many spells. If you enter this agreement, he is bound to keep his part of the oath just as you are.

TYR: (*snidely*) Great advice from the son of a giant! It's a trick. They're in cahoots!

LOKI: (*angrily*) I've seen my share of giants. They treated me like a slave! I barely escaped Jotunheim with my life! What do I owe them?

TYR: Hmph. A likely story.

LOKI: Does anybody else have a better idea?

NARRATOR: Thor scrunched up his face in thought.

THOR: The weird, little weasel-creature makes a good point.

LOKI: Um. Thank you...I guess. The giant will fail. I'd stake my reputation on it.

TYR: Your reputation? A *small* wager if I've ever seen one. You're almost as much a stranger as this giant-mason is!

NARRATOR: Loki addressed Odin directly.

LOKI: The fact remains, Odin, you need a wall—or this Asgard will fall just as quickly as the last one did.

NARRATOR: Odin sat thoughtfully.

ODIN: Very well.

FREY: Wait! Odin, you can't just marry my sister off to some giant!

ODIN: Loki is right. The giant will not be able to finish the job by summer.

FREY: But what if he does? Is this how the Vanir are treated by your people?

ODIN: I'm sorry, my boy, but you *did* put yourself under my command.

NARRATOR: Freya began to weep.

FREYA: I'll be the bride of a giant! Thank the Norns my father is dead, or he would die of shame!

ODIN: There is nothing to worry out.

FREY: Not for you anyway. It's easy to gamble with the fates of others.

NARRATOR: The giant stonemason was sent for, and when Odin declared that the gods would take his deal, he began to rub his massive hands together greedily.

ODIN: But you are required to complete the job alone! No one may help you!

GIANT: Fair enough. But surely you will allow me the use of my horse and cart.

NARRATOR: Odin shot Loki a questioning glance.

LOKI: What good is a horse?

ODIN: Fine. Use your horse and cart. It will not matter.

GIANT: As you say! The deal is struck. Farewell, fools! (*diabolical laugh*)

NARRATOR: The stranger turned and swept from the room. His evil laughter echoed down the hallway.

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BALDER: (*happily*) That went well, don't you think?

NARRATOR: The Æsir followed the giant stonemason to see him begin his work. But instead of delving directly into his labor, the giant raised his long hands and cupped them around his mouth.

GIANT: (*horse whinny*) Neigh! Neigh!

SVADILFARE: (*horse whinny*) Neigh! Neigh! (*hoofbeats*)

NARRATOR: Down from the mountains thundered an enormous horse. Tufts of hair nearly covered its hooves, and its neck was as thick as an oak. Behind it rattled a wagon heaped with stone.

HEIMDALL: That's the biggest horse I've ever seen!

GIANT: Yes, stupid, puny god. He is my steed, Svadilfare.

NARRATOR: The horse and cart came to a stop before the gods. The beast gave them a wise glance, and much to their surprise unhooked itself from the wagon and stood upon its hind legs. It was now as tall as its giant master.

HEIMDALL: (*shocked*) By the Norns! It's a monster!

SVADILFARE: (*booming*) I am no monster, foolish gods! I am a lord among horses, and I have come to see that this wall is completed by the beginning of summer. You silly gods have played right into our trap! (*horse laugh*) Ha!

THOR: (*yelling*) Laugh it up, Horse-breath! It'll be hard to build a wall after Thor has ripped your hooves off! (*battlecry*) Argh!

ODIN: Thor! No! We have made our bargain. We have no choice but to leave them to their work and hope that they are not successful.

NARRATOR: Thor raised a menacing finger toward the giant-in-disguise.

THOR: Listen to me, giant! After this is over, you and I shall meet in battle, and only one of us will walk away with a head.

GIANT: (*laughs*) When this is over, puny one, you will live in a world of darkness, and the giants will overcome you at last! (*laughter*)

NARRATOR: The two giant beings fell into work. Stone upon stone was laid by the mason, who stayed true to his word and placed each one with precision and cunning. His craft was so great that when he would be finally finished, the wall would be as a cliff of solid stone around the halls of Asgard.

The giant's steed worked day and night—never sleeping—dragging loads of rock from the broken remains of a nearby mountain. He was worth even more work than his master. Using rope and pulley, he hoisted the heaviest stones into place, and the mason uttered strange spells over them—spells of binding. And so the gods began to despair.

BALDER: Perhaps life without the sun and moon will not be as bad as we think.

ODIN: We'll be living in total darkness!

BALDER: (*confidently*) Well, even in darkness there is always hope.

ODIN: Don't be ridiculous! There never has been hope, and there never will be.

FREYA: I'll be thankful for the darkness, since it will spare me the sight of my monster husband!

ODIN: (*angrily*) Enough! Where is that Loki creature? Bring him to me at once!

NARRATOR: The Æsir combed the halls of Asgard, but no one could find Loki.

TYR: I knew it! He's abandoned us! (*pause*) Wait!

NARRATOR: Tyr cocked his head to listen.

LOKI: Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

NARRATOR: Tyr's hand shot out, snatching a fly from the air.

TYR: There you are, you traitor!

LOKI: (*tiny voice*) Zzzzzz. Let go! Let go!

TYR: Reveal yourself, or I'll squash you like—well, a bug!

NARRATOR: The full-sized Loki appeared—folding his wings and legs back up into his body.

TYR: Here's the traitor! I say we kill him for trying to desert us!

ODIN: (*angrily*) Loki! Were you trying to escape?

LOKI: Oh no! Not escape! I was just innocently eavesdropping. Just being a fly on the wall. (*forced laugh*) Heh heh. Get it?

ODIN: (*booming*) This is no joke!

NARRATOR: Odin rose from his throne in anger, and the atmosphere around him began to crackle with power.

LOKI: (*cry of fright*) Please! Spare me!

ODIN: I have declared that no god blood will ever be spilt in this holy hall, and I will not break my word!

TYR: You could always take him outside...

ODIN: But how dare you try to abandon us after we gave you friendship here in Asgard!

NARRATOR: Odin raised his hand, and an invisible wind lifted Loki into the air. The helpless creature began to spin—caught in a whirlwind. (*whooshing of a whirlwind*)

LOKI: Ah! Stop! Please!

TYR: Hmmm. I was hoping he would smite him, but this is good, too.

ODIN: Loki, you have gotten us into this mess, and you will get us out of it!

LOKI: Please! Please! Stop!

NARRATOR: Odin lowered his hand, and Loki fell in a heap upon the floor.

LOKI: It's hopeless. What can I do?

ODIN: *You* figure it out.

NARRATOR: Loki rose—trembling.

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LOKI: I will stop this giant—but I have my terms.

TYR: How dare you ask anything of us! Turn him over to me, Father! I'll drag him out of Asgard and then end his life!

ODIN: What do you ask—other than keeping your life?

LOKI: Make me one of you. No more of this half-breed business. I want to be a blood-brother of the gods. And give me one of the goddesses as my wife.

NARRATOR: Loki's beady eyes rested on Freya. Frey stepped angrily in front of his sister.

TYR: You'll never be one of us! Will he, Father?

NARRATOR: All the gods stared at Odin expectantly. As much as they loathed Loki, they knew he was their only hope.

ODIN: Very well, Loki. We will honor your terms.

NARRATOR: Loki smoothed down his mussed hair and cracked his bony knuckles.

LOKI: That's more like it. Hmm. Now, tell me more about his horse. Is it a steed or a mare?

ODIN: (*angrily*) I haven't checked lately.

TYR: (*growling*) It is a steed.

LOKI: Perfect! I can solve your problem. You will have your wall—and light to shine upon it!

NARRATOR: Loki slunk out from the presence of the Æsir and into the courtyard of Asgard. The giant's wall had been built all the way around the halls of the gods. The only portion missing was the grand archway that was to hang above the gates. The two giant builders stood nearby humming to themselves as they prepared to put the final nail in the Æsir's coffin. The giant stonemason paused in his work, stretched, and yawned.

GIANT: (*yawn*) Svadilfare, all that is left is the archway, and we have a whole day left before summer is here. The sun is getting hot. I think I'll take a nap. Go ahead and drag the arch-piece over here while I'm napping. When I wake, we'll hoist it into place.

SVADILFARE: (*sarcastically*) Of course. Why would I need a break?

GIANT: (*angrily*) Silence, dumb beast! Do it immediately—or I'll turn you into glue for the bricks!

NARRATOR: The builder stretched and padded over to the shady side of the wall.

SVADILFARE: (*grumbling*) Where would he be without me to do his dirty work?

LOKI: My plan will work perfectly.

NARRATOR: Loki covered his mouth to stifle a giggle, and with a wiggle of his ears, he turned himself into the loveliest pink mare creation had ever seen. He made sure to make his coat extra shiny and his rump especially plump. With a feminine whinny he trotted out of hiding. (*hoofbeats*)

LOKI: (*feminine voice*) Oh, Svadilfare! Yoo-hoo! Svadilfare!

NARRATOR: Svadilfare the steed looked up and neighed in shock.

SVADILFARE: (*neigh of surprise*) By my hooves! A mare!

NARRATOR: He ran to the side of the transformed Loki.

SVADILFARE: Hey, there! I haven't seen you around here before. New in town?

LOKI: I heard there was a stud farm in these parts, but I had no idea how true it would be. Tee hee.

SVADILFARE: If I said you had a nice muzzle, would you hold it against me?

NARRATOR: The pink mare put on a sudden pout.

LOKI: (*suddenly hard-to-get*) No, thank you, slave.

NARRATOR: Svadilfare looked at the mare with a puzzled look.

SVADILFARE: (*confused*) Why did you call me a slave?

LOKI: (*innocently*) Well, that's what you are, isn't it? I mean, you spend all day working and you never get paid for it. Isn't that a slave?

SVADILFARE: No—I—Uh...

LOKI: Why don't you come away with me? We can frolic in the fields and feast on the grass and be free! Just the two of us. Tee hee.

SVADILFARE: All right!

NARRATOR: Svadilfare puckered his horse-lips up for a kiss.

LOKI: (*under his breath*) Yuck. I've got to get out of here—and quick.

NARRATOR: Loki the beautiful mare took off toward the mountains. (*hoofbeats*)

LOKI: (*lovey-dovey*) Catch me if you can, big boy!

SVADILFARE: I love it when they play hard-to-get!

NARRATOR: The stallion charged off, hot on Loki's heels. (*hoofbeats*)

LOKI: (*under his breath*) Those gods owe me big time for this.

NARRATOR: And so the two horses disappeared from Asgard. Loki led Svadilfare for miles and miles, down the Rainbow Bridge—through world after world.

When the giant stonemason awoke from his nap and found his horse had vanished, his roars filled the entire valley.

GIANT: (*roar*) Svadilfare! Svadilfare! Where are you? If I ever find you, you can kiss your flea-bitten hide goodbye!

ODIN: (*cooly*) Ahem. Is there a problem?

NARRATOR: Odin All-Father and the other Æsir strolled up nonchalantly.

GIANT: (*ferociously*) Don't think that you have won! All I have left is this arch piece. I can finish this wall just as easily by myself!

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ODIN: Can you? My, my. You know, that piece looks rather large. Make sure you lift with your legs. (*chuckle*)

NARRATOR: Try as he might, the giant could not lift the arch piece high enough to fit into place.

GIANT: (*grunting*) Curse that horse! Curse you gods! Curse the sun and the moon!

NARRATOR: All the night, he toiled—pushing it this way and that way—cursing every being under the sun. But he could not fit the piece into place.

The first day of summer dawned. The Æsir were waiting by the wall to greet it. The giant was in a heap upon the ground, where he had fallen during the night—completely exhausted. His magic was fading, and his disguise had melted away. His true appearance surfaced—that of a being with grotesque features covered in boils and gangly limbs matted with foul hair.

ODIN: Thank you for the wall, giant. It will keep *your kind* safely out of our home forever.

GIANT: (*hoarsely*) You cheats may have won this time, but we will find another way to destroy you! I swear it!

TYR: (*playfully*) What's that? I can't hear you. You're a little *horse*.

(*laughter from all the gods*)

ODIN: Now, Thor—if you don't mind escorting our guest out of Asgard.

THOR: With pleasure!

NARRATOR: Thor ran forward and lifted the giant by his gangly limbs. He spun the giant around and around, and with a whoosh—released him—sending him flying up, up, up, over the mountains. (*whistling sound*) There was a slight cracking sound as he touched down far away.

(*polite clapping from the gods*)

TYR: Nice distance.

THOR: (*booming*) One giant down! Many more to go!

ODIN: Yes, we have averted certain disaster—for now. But the giant was right: They will come at us with other tricks, other deceptions. We must be on our guard.

NARRATOR: The attention of the gods was drawn to a bend in the path, where Loki, back in his normal form, staggered into view. All kinds of leaves and twigs were stuck to his body, and he looked three steps from dead.

LOKI: (*breathlessly*) I—I—I finally ditched him. There ain't nothing like outrunning an amorous horse.

THOR: I say, three cheers for Loki! His trick has saved the day!

ALL: Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!

NARRATOR: Only Tyr refused to cheer.

ODIN: Loki, trickster, you have saved Asgard! We have a brand new wall, which will make us safe for generations to come—all thanks to you. We welcome you as one of our own!

NARRATOR: Through his panting breaths, the trickster gave a sly smile.

LOKI: It's about time!

FREYA: Thank you for saving me from such a monstrous husband!

NARRATOR: Freya ran forward to kiss Loki upon the cheek. Balder and Thor lifted the skinny trickster up on their shoulders and carried him between the mighty pillars of the newly-built wall. That day Loki was the toast of Asgard, and all was cheerful there for a time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you find interesting about the Norse creation story? Explain.
- Do the gods treat Loki fairly? Explain.
- What makes Loki a good ally for the Æsir?
- Were the Æsir wise for taking the giant's deal? Explain.
- Was it fair for the gods to win the way they did? Explain.
- What are the different personalities of the gods?
- Should the gods trust Loki? Explain.