

Knjiga "Norse colouring odyssey: A colouring book inspired by Norse myths, tales and legends"

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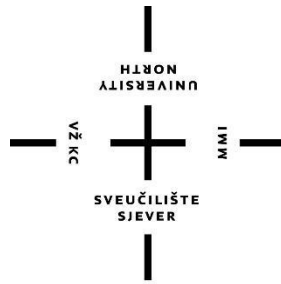
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Završni rad br. 230/MED/2023

Knjiga „Norse colouring odyssey: A colouring book inspired by Norse myths, tales and legends“

Žan Blanuša, 3612/336



Sveučilište Sjever

Odjel za Medijski Dizajn

Završni rad br. 230/MED/2023

Knjiga „Norse colouring odyssey: A colouring book inspired by Norse myths, tales and legends“

Student

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Prijava završnog rada

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Zadatak završnog rada

BROJ 230/MED/2023

OPIS
Ovaj rad je eksperimentalna knjiga u pogledu ilustracije kao fenomena i grafike kao medija, na temu nordijske mitologije. Eksperimentalnost je testirana kroz stanovitu interaktivnost bojanke/slikovnice. Na test uzorku (krugu poznanika i prijatelja) donesen je zaklju ak da je eksperiment opravdao medijsku utemeljenost te je rezultat prakti nog rada fizi ka bojanke.

U radu je potrebno:

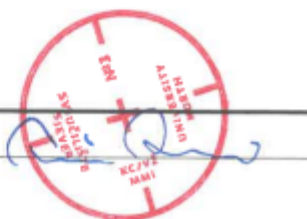
- fokusirati i artikulirati nadahnjuju i siže (Nordijska mitologija);
- odabrati medijski optimalni vid istraživanja i prakti ne izvedbe;
- objasniti i predo iti slijed medijske razrade izvedbe (od prvih skica do finalne knjižice);
- izvesti prakti ni dio rada u odabranom grafi kom mediju;
- analizirati provedeno i iznesti zaklju ak.

ZADATAK URUČEN

15.9.2023.

POTPIS MENTORA

SVEUČILIŠTE
SIEVER



Predgovor

Knjiga „Norse colouring odyssey: A colouring book inspired by Norse myths, tales and legends“ je eksperimentalna knjiga u pogledu ilustracije kao fenomena i grafike kao medija, na temu nordijske mitologije. Eksperimentalnost je testirana kroz stanovitu interaktivnost bojanke/slikovnice. Na test uzorku (krugu poznanika i prijatelja) donesen je zaključak da je eksperiment opravdao medijsku utemeljenost te je rezultat praktičnog rada fizička bojanica.

Sažetak

U današnje moderno, ubrzano vrijeme veliki broj ljudi je potpuno prešao na digitalne oblike medija. Klasične bojanke postaju stvar prošlosti, a sve su popularnije digitalne igre i aplikacije. Prvobitna ideja rada je bila upravo napraviti bojanke, no inspiracije koje su nastale temeljitim proučavanjem nordijske mitologije doprinijele su dodatku interesantnih priča koje su se dokazale ključnim dijelom ove knjige. Ovaj rad daje čitatelju šansu na zabavan način educirati se o mitovima i legendama, te umjetničku slobodu ostaviti vlastiti trag u te priče bojanjem njihovih crteža.

Ključne riječi: knjiga, bojanke, mit, legenda, crtež, umjetnost

Summary

In today's modern, fast-paced times, a large number of people have completely switched to digital forms of media. Classic coloring books are becoming a thing of the past, and digital games and applications are becoming increasingly popular. The original idea of the work was to make a coloring book, but the inspirations that arose from a thorough study of Norse mythology contributed to the addition of interesting stories that proved to be the key part of this book. This work gives the reader the chance to educate himself about myths and legends in a fun way, and the artistic freedom to leave his own mark on these stories by coloring their drawings.

Keywords: book, colouring-book, myth, legend, drawing, art

Popis korištenih kratica

DIN Deutsches Institut für Normung
ISO 216 Današnji naziv za format DIN

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1. Uvod

Otkad pamtim za sebe, oduvijek sam volio crtati. Moji crteži uglavnom nisu nikada bili nešto spektakularno, ali volio sam mogućnosti koje bi mi olovka i papir davale da se kreativno izražavam. Tijekom školovanja imao sam hrpe bilježnica u kojima bi svako malo nešto crtao na stražnje strane ili korice, hrpe papirića na koje bi smještao male čovječuljke, motore, zmajeve, što god mi je u trenutku bilo na umu - makar neke apstraktne linije i geometrije.

Nordijska mitologija se u mojem životu rijetko pojavljivala na razne načine; kud kroz reference unutar nekih drugih priča i serija, kud kroz tekstove pjesama, kud kroz videoigre. Moju potpunu pažnju je zadobila vjerojatno prije nekoliko godina kroz videoigru „Valheim“, kreativnu avanturističku igru smještenu unutar svijeta Vikinga i nordijske mitologije gdje se pojavljuju njeni bogovi, stvorenja, stilovi gradnje, oprema i oružja. To me inspiriralo da skiciram neke elemente iz igre, temeljitije istražim mitologiju i ostao sam zapanjen njenim pričama.



Slika 1: Valheim

Nordijska mitologija obuhvaća veliki spektar događaja, počevši sa spektakularnim stvorenjem svijeta, njegovih bogova i prvih ljudi, sljedeći njegovim prvim velikim ratom, podizanjem zidina Asgarda i uzdizanjem njegovih bogova u moći. Tu je i mnoštvo priča o avanturama lukavog boga Lokija, boga Thora koji mrzi divove, Odinovog traganja za beskrajnom moći i znanjem, priča o prijateljstvima, svadama i dvobojima te konačni finale, Ragnarok - rat svih ratova i kraj svih svjetova.

Na ideju bojanke inspirirala me moja djevojka koja je u to vrijeme igrala igru bojanja na mobitelu. Prilikom definiranja teme završnog rada moja želja bila je spojiti moju strast za crtanjem putem medija bojanke i zapanjujuću nordijsku mitologiju, te je tako započela moja potraga za rasporedom priča koje bi u konačnici redom spojio u zbirku priča i crteža.

2. Obrada zadatka

2.1. Skiciranje

Skiciranje je prvi korak u pravljenju većine umjetničkih projekata. Skiciranjem grubo definiramo glavne elemente i crte crteža, ali ne i detalje. Skice su prva faza promišljanja u kojem smjeru želimo napredovati radom. Ovaj korak je izuzetno važan - kada um stvori mentalnu skicu, izvođenje rukama na papir pomaže poboljšanju tehnike i vizualizaciji ideje koja padne umjetniku na pamet.

Vježbanje skiciranja ima velike prednosti poput povećanja inspiracije, poboljšanja kreativne sposobnosti i izbjegavanja grešaka - u fazi skiciranja moguće je primijetiti potencijalne buduće probleme koji se mogu pojaviti u drugim fazama rada.

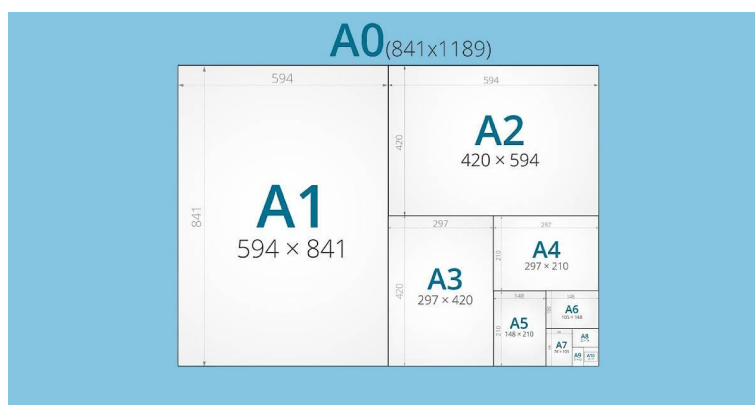


Slika 2: Primjer skiciranja

2.2. Formati knjiga

Postoje različiti formati knjiga. Najčešći korišteni formati su po standardu DIN A, B i C formata - ovdje spada popularni format A4 (210x297mm). Knjige su često rađene u B formatima, a popularna dimenzija je B5 (176x250mm).

DIN formati nastali su dvadesetih godina 20. stoljeća u njemačkom institutu DIN (Deutsches Institut für Normung). Ovaj standard danas je poznat kao ISO 216. Razlog popularnosti DIN formata je odnos proporcija 1.414:1 - proporcija koja se ne mijenja kada se papir savija na pola.



Slika 3: Primjer formata knjiga

2.3. Tipografija

Riječ tipografija složenica je grčkih riječi typos (forma/žig) i grafein (pisati). To je „znanost o slovima, umjetnost upotrebe tipografskih slovničkih znakova, vještina slaganja, izrade, oblikovanja i funkcionalne upotrebe slova.“ [1]

Tipografijom definiramo kombiniranje tipografskih jedinica kako bi formirali poruku. Posao dizajnera je definirati koje tipografsko pismo koristi za određeni projekt da bi se ostvarila što efikasnija komunikacija, te atraktivan izgled.

communicate
modern typography
graphic design
libra laboratorium
PETRICE KEREMPUHA
mastering
important

Slika 4: Primjer tipografija

3. Praktični dio

3.1. Faza prikupljanja informacija

Videoigra „Valheim“ bila je iskra koja je započela moju potragu za pričama nordijske mitologije. Ovdje sam započeo sa ključnim pojmovima poput bogova Odina, Thora, Lokija, mjestima poput Asgarda, Midlanda, Vanaheima, različitim rasama i stanovnicima poput divova i patuljaka. Pronašao sam YouTube video „Norse Mythology Explained In 15 Minutes“ na kanalu „The Life Guide“ [2] te odavde nastavio prema različitim izvorima, uključujući videe, on-line knjige i različite članke koji su pisali o mitologiji, poput „Norse Summaries“. [3]

U ovoj fazi prikupio sam informacije o mitologiji te razvio strukturu i raspored nekih od najzanimljivijih priča koje sam pronašao, i posložio ih trudeći se održati pravilan vremenski redosljed događaja. Pošto su ovo većinom priče fikcije i prenesene „s koljena na koljeno“, postoje određena kršenja redoslijeda događaja, no cilj mi je bio poredati događaje i po tomu da imaju smisla.



Slika 5: Nordijska mitologija

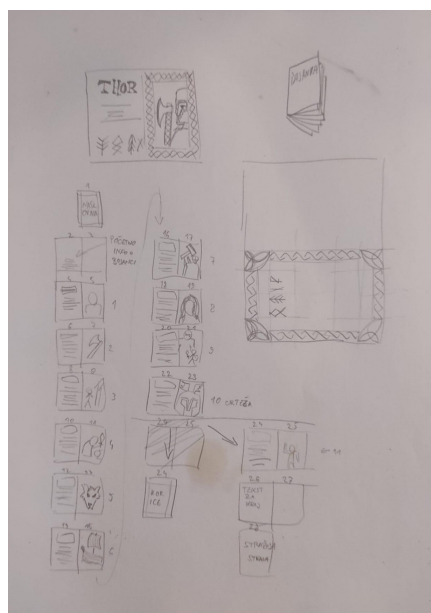
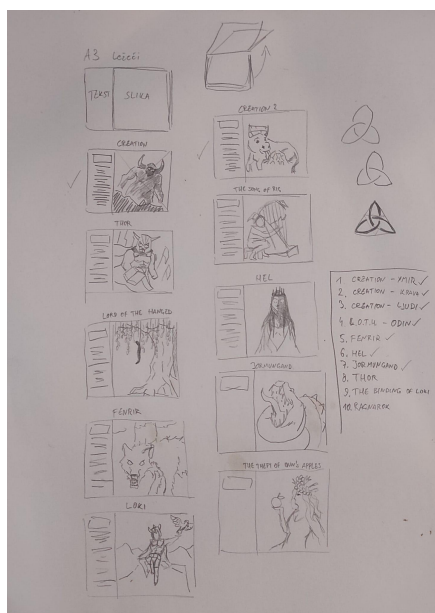
3.2. Struktura izgleda stranica

Ovaj projekt glavnim djelom rađen je u programu za izradu publikacija Adobe InDesign.

U planu strukture stranica podrazumijevao sam da prvo idu priče, pa nakon svake ide crtež (ili više njih). Odlučio sam da tekstovi uvijek počinju na desnoj strani i, ako imaju dovoljno teksta, prelaze na iduću lijevu stranu. Crtež koji slijedi uvijek je na desnoj strani i nakon njega, iduća lijeva strana, ostaje prazna. Razlog za tom odlukom je da se crteži mogu bojati i flomasterima, i kako bi spriječio precrtavanje na tekst ili crtež na drugoj strani, ostaje prazna. Na taj način čitatelj ima slobodu bojanja kako želi, i može koristiti podlogu na sljedećoj strani kako bi izbjegao precrtavanje na sljedeću desnu stranu sa tekstom.

S tim problemom precrtavanja susreo sam se kad sam djevojci kupio bojaniku za odrasle i kada smo htjeli koristiti flomastere na bazi alkohola - kompletno smo uništili crtež sljedeće strane. Na ovaj način smatram da sam optimalno izbjegao taj problem.

Za dimenzije knjige odlučio sam koristiti A5 format, cilj mi nije bio napraviti klasičnu A4 bojaniku već da više izgleda kao „sketchbook“, manja bilježnica za crtanje i skiciranje. Na ovaj način mogu uštedjeti na prostoru, knjiga je kompaktnija, stoga može stati u manje torbe, i čitatelj ju može nositi sa sobom ako se želi fokusirati na čitanje.



Slika 6: Skice izgleda stranica, verzija 1 Slika 7: Skice izgleda stranica, verzija 2

3.3. Tekstovi knjige

Za tekstove knjige odlučio sam uzeti priče od početka - nastanka svijeta, popraćene raznim događajima, i finalizirati krajem - Ragnarokom.

Priče koje sam iskoristio idu redom:

1. The Creation (Stvaranje svijeta)
2. The War of the Aesir and Vanir (Rat između Aesira i Vanira)
3. The building of Asgard's Wall (Podizanje Asgardovih zidina)
4. The Lord of the Hanged (Gospodar Objješanih)
5. Loki's Children and The Binding of Fenrir (Lokijeva djeca i Vezivanje Fenrira)
6. The Theft of Idunn's Apples (Krađa Idunninih Jabuka)
7. Loki and the Eagle (Loki i Orao)
8. The Marriage of Njord and Skadi (Vjenčanje Njorda i Skadi)
9. The Treasure of the Gods (Blago Bogova)
10. The Necklace of Brisings (Ogrlica Brisingsa)
11. The Lay of Thrym (Smrt Thryma)
12. The Lay of Vafthrundir (Smrt Vafthrundira)
13. Thor's Journey to Utgard (Thorov Put u Utgard)
14. Thor's Duel with Hrungnir (Thorov Dvoboj s Hrungnirom)
15. The Lay of Harbard (Smrt Harbarda)
16. Thor and Geirrod (Thor i Geirrod)
17. The Otter's Ransom (Vidrina Otkupnina)
18. The Death of Balder (Smrt Baldera)
19. The Binding of Loki (Vezivanje Lokija)
20. Ragnarok

Naslovi su pisani fontom Norse - Bold veličine 32pt, a tekstovi serifnim fontom Minion Pro - regular, 9pt. Naslovi nad crtežima su Norse - Bold, veličine 22pt. Korišteno je centralno poravnanje kako bi postigao balans. Norse font sam odabrao jer se dobro uklapa u tematiku knjige, a serifno pismo Minion Pro iskoristio sam kako bi tekstovi bili ugodniji za čitanje.



NORSE

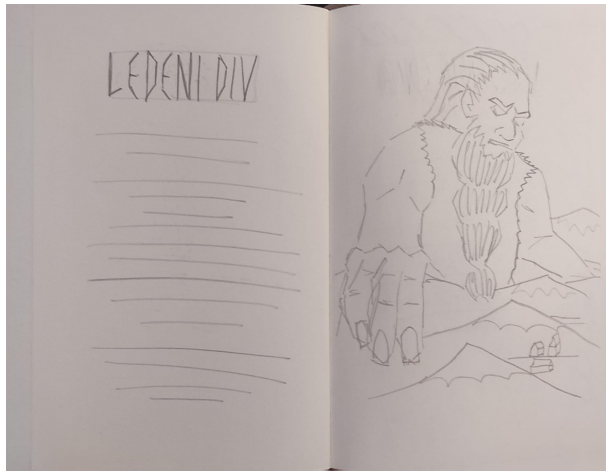
Slika 8: Norse font



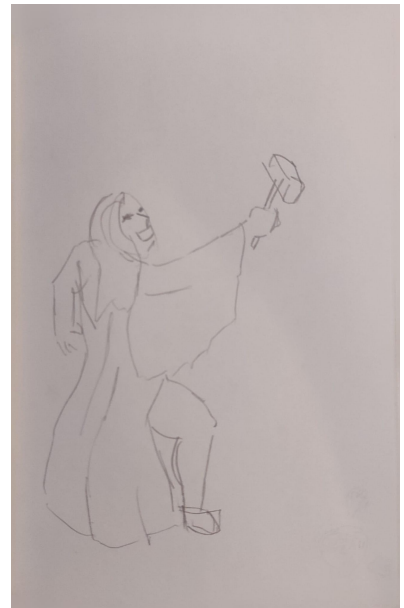
Minion Pro

Slika 9: Minion Pro font

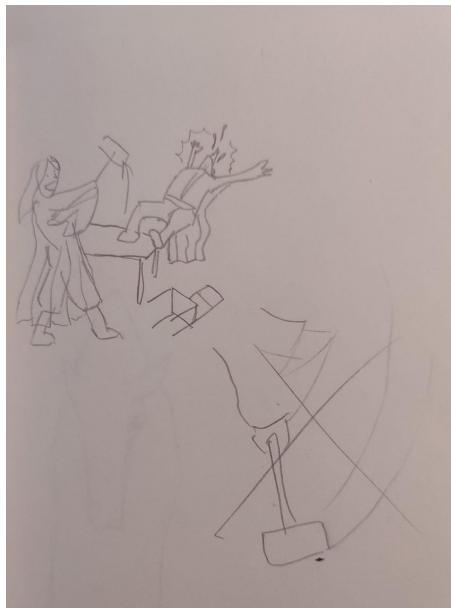
3.4. Crteži knjige



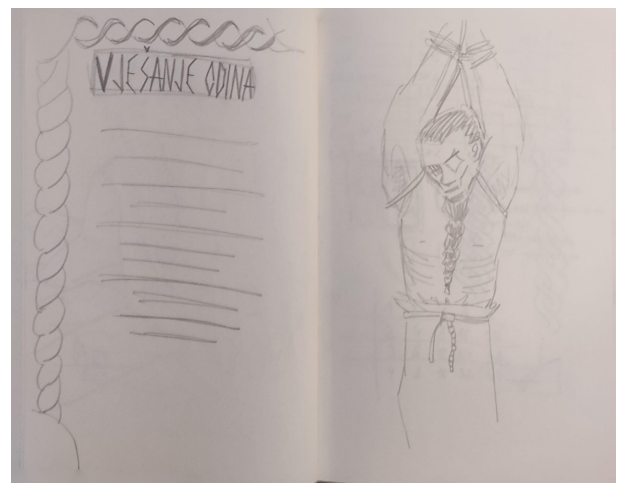
Slika 10: Skica stranica Ymira



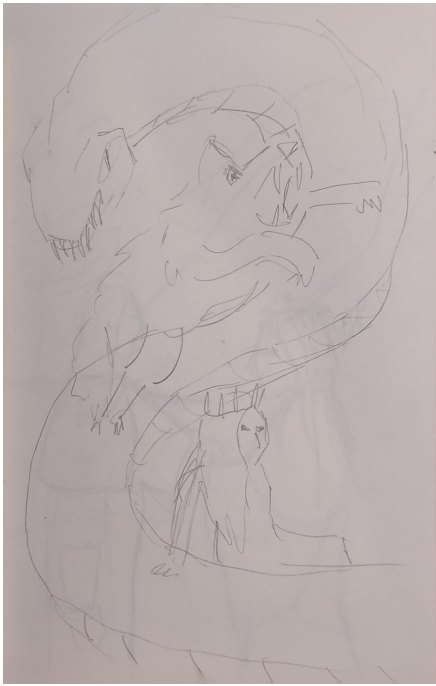
Slika 11: Skica Thora



Slika 12: Skica Thora i Thryma



Slika 13: Skica stranica Odina



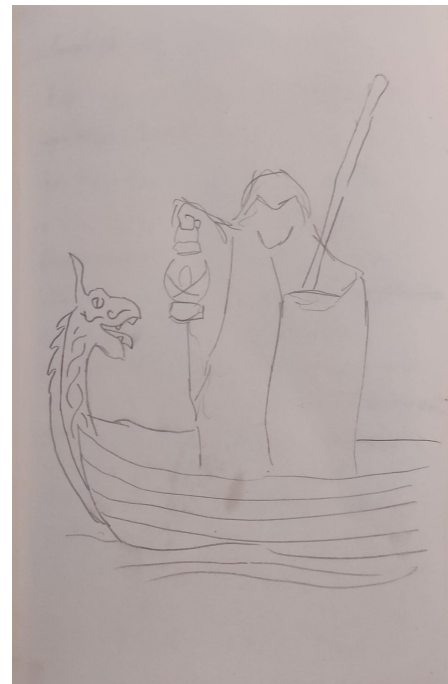
Slika 14: Skica Hel, Jormungandra i Fenrira



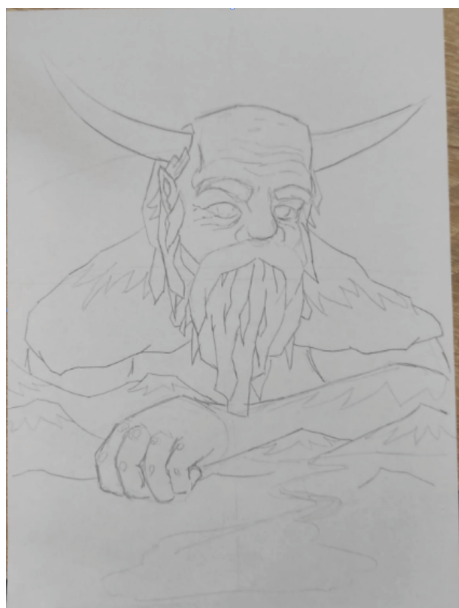
Slika 15: Skica Njorda i Skadi, verzija 1



Slika 16: Skica Njorda i Skadi, verzija 2

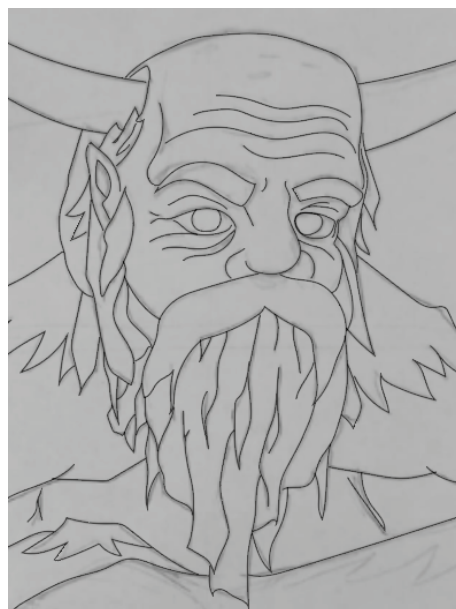


Slika 17: Skica skeledžije



Slika 18: Skica Ymira

Te skice sam zatim fotografirao i prenesao na program Adobe Illustrator, te ovdje pažljivo pratio linije i složio vektorske grafike crteža. Ovdje sam radio na detaljima i pozadinama, te precrtao skice koristeći Pencil Tool. Linije su debljine 0.5pt, sa 50% zatamnjenja.



Slika 19: Vektorski crtež

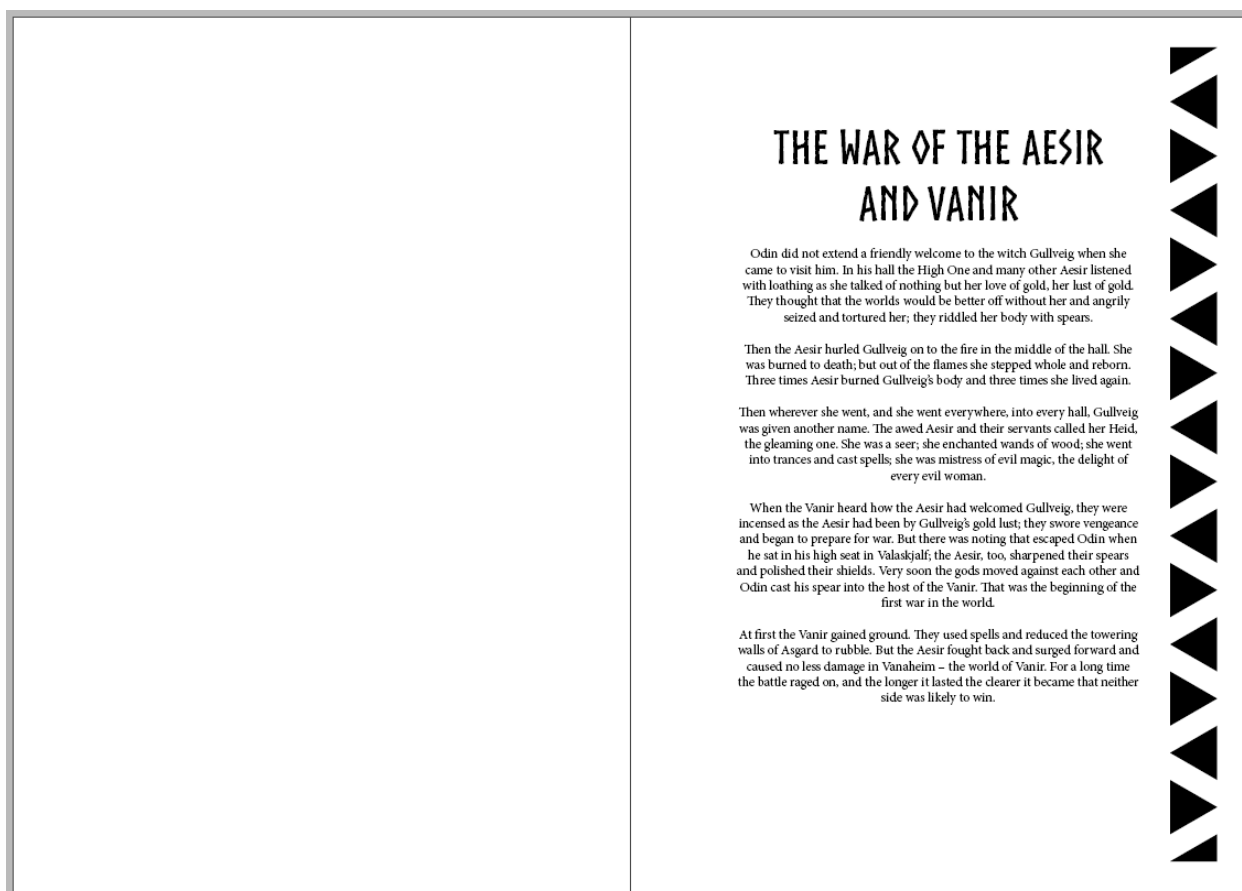
Slijedi najveća i osobno najzabavnija faza rada. S prikupljenim pričama i inspiracijama započeo sam skicirati crteže. Nakon što sam proučio svaku priču, istražio sam anatomiju ljudskog tijela u različitim aktivnostima kao reference, te počeo prvo sa skicama rukom na papiru.

Te vektorske grafike sam zatim prebacio u Adobe InDesign, i smjestio ih uz njihove odgovarajuće priče.

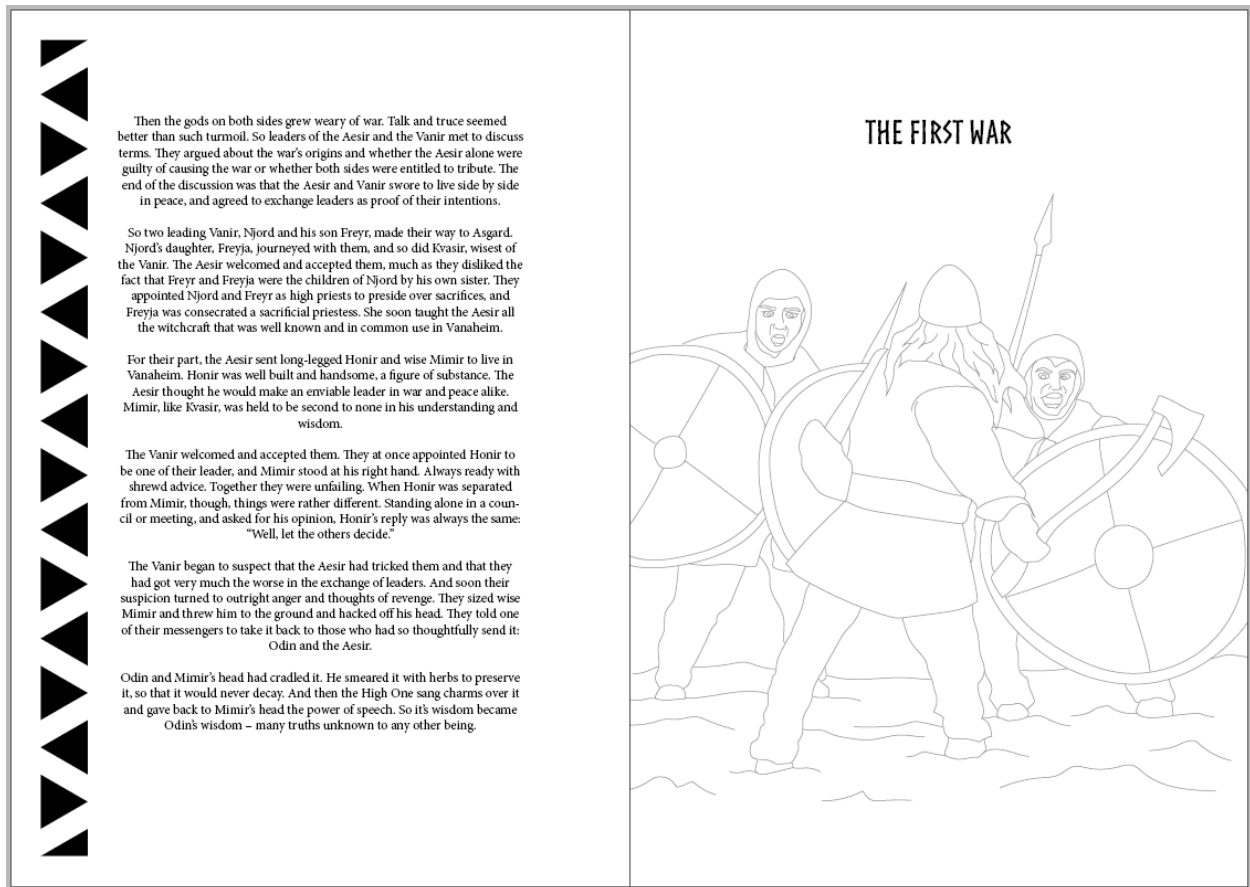
Uz tekstove sam također dodao motive nordijske mitologije - često su korišteni različiti oblici čvorova i vezanih oblika poput korijena drva ili zmija, tako sam odlučio dodati trokutaste oblike koji se ritmom povezuju i djeluju kao vezane linije.



Slika 20: Linija trokuta



Slika 21: Strana sa tekстом

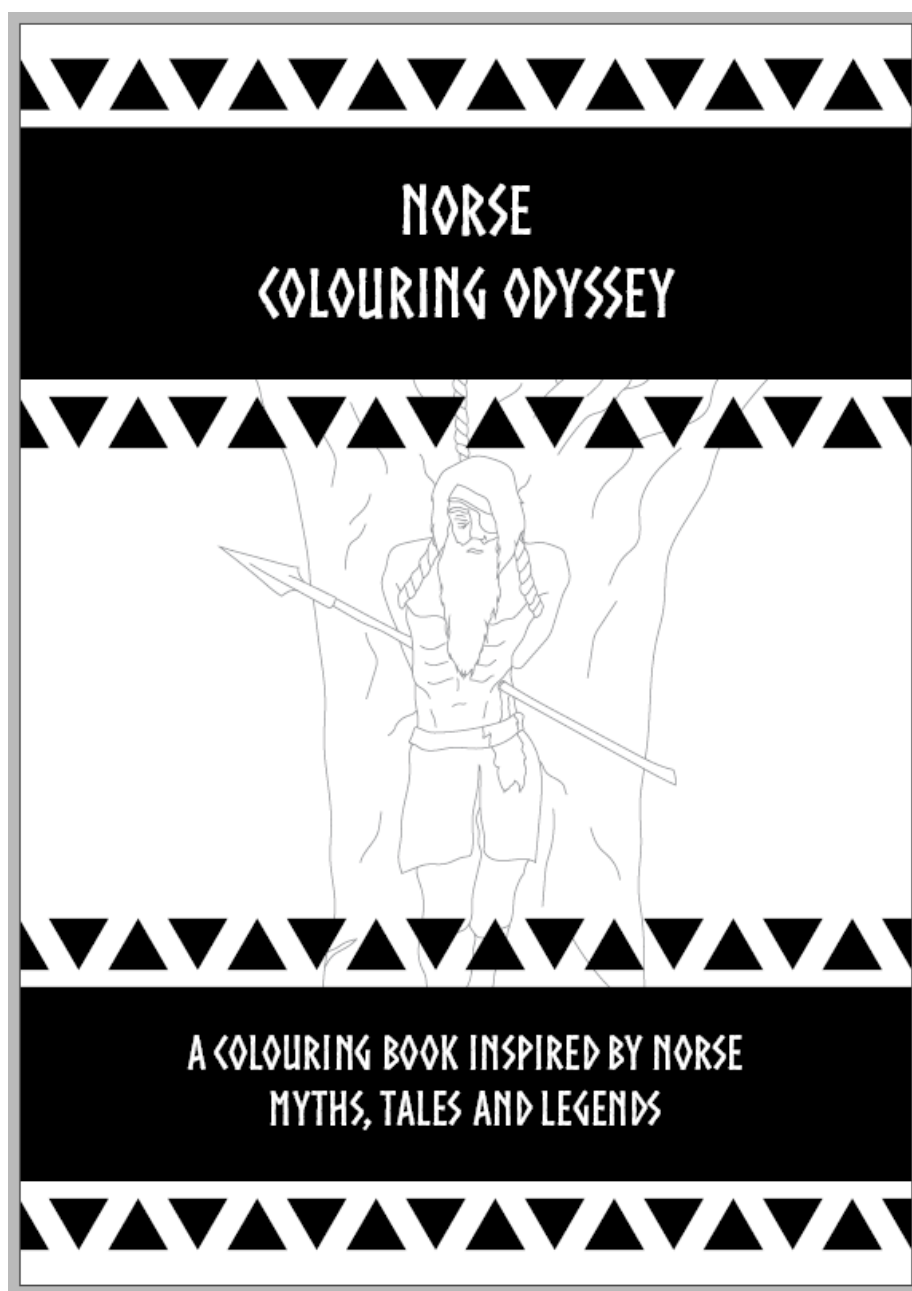


Slika 22: Strana sa tekstom i crtežom

3.5. Dizajn korica

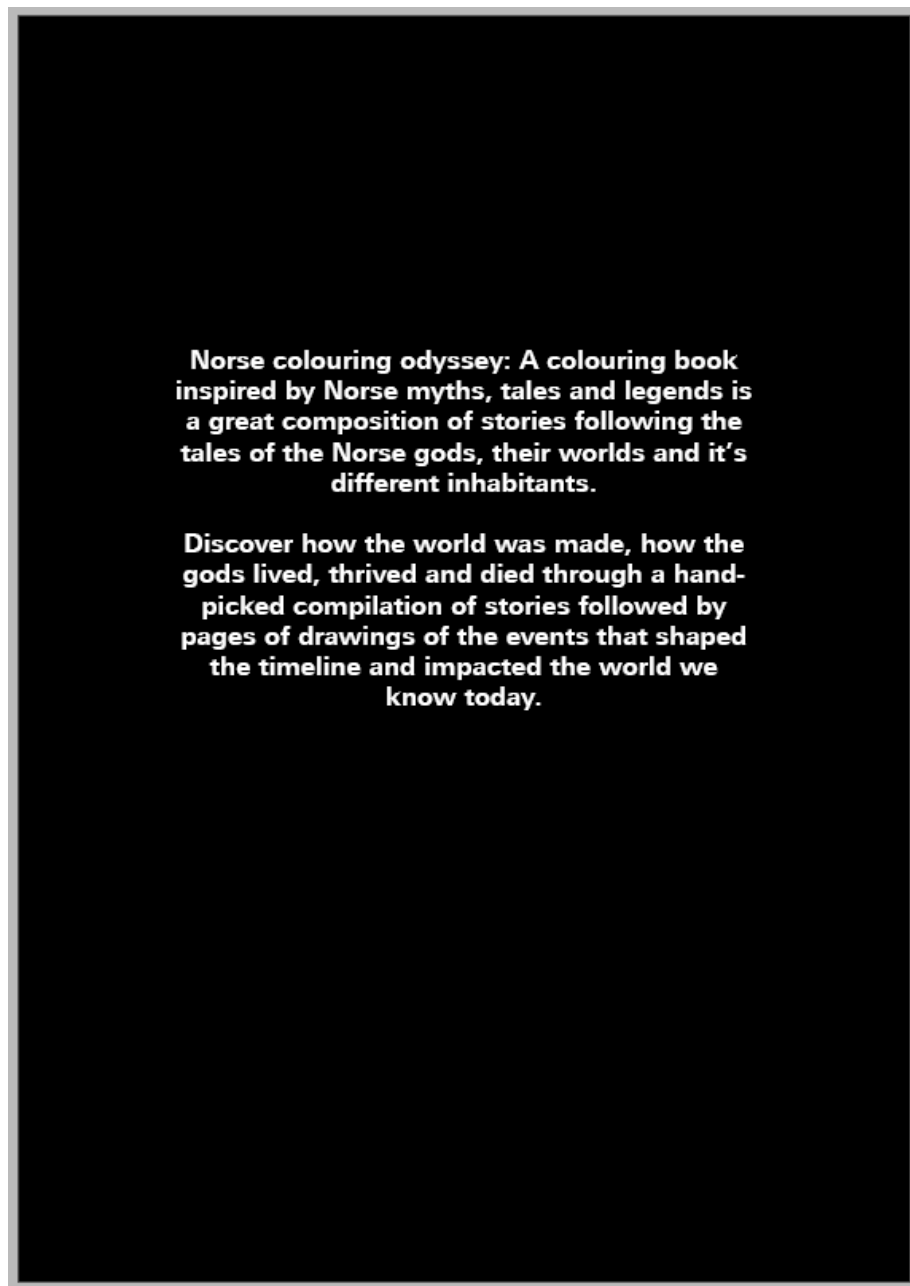
Konačan korak u izradi knjige bio mi je dizajn prednje i stražnje strane korica.

Za prednju stranu odlučio sam staviti jednu od slika unutar knjige - tu čast je dobio bog Odin iz svoje priče u kojoj se žrtvovao kako bi zadobio beskonačnu moć i znanje. Slika dominira vertikalnom osi, pa kako bi stvorio balans naslov sam složio u negativu na dvije crne linije na vrhu i dnu stranice. Te dvije linije popraćene su motivom vezanih trokuta kako bi dodao malo dinamike dizajnu.



Slika 23: Prednja strana

Stražnja strana korica je kompletno u negativu, i tamo sam centralno smjestio tekst koji uvodi u priču knjige. Tekst je pisan fontom Univers Next Pro - Bold, 12pt. Odluku za fontom sam donio željeći naglasiti tekst, font je bez serifa pošto nije namijenjen kao tekst koji se duže čita već kao kratki sadržaj i koji će privući pažnju čitatelja.



Slika 24: Stražnja strana

4. Zaključak

Ovaj rad je bio projekt moje strasti prema crtanju i novonastale strasti prema nordijskoj mitologiji. Kroz projekt sam proširio vidike i stekao nova znanja o nordijskoj mitologiji, potakao sebe na razmišljanje i kreativnost radeći crteže, te spojio ugodno s korisnim da finalno stvorim svoj prvi veliki kreativni projekt. Znanje koje sam stekao tijekom studiranja pomoglo mi je u strukturiranju priča, tipografije i samih crteža. Stekao sam osoban rast ovim procesom i proširio vlastite vidike u svijetu mitova i legendi. Ovaj rad htio bi podijeliti s drugima u nadi da na jedan zanimljiv i interaktivan način uvedem ljude u fantastičan svijet nordijske mitologije, te ih zabavim i potaknem na vlastitu kreativnost bojanjem njenih crteža.

Za kraj bi još želio zahvaliti svima koji su mi pružali potporu i inspirirali me na ovaj veliki projekt:

Hvala majki Maji što mi je oduvijek pa i kroz cijeli projekt bila apsolutna potpora;

Hvala mojoj djevojci Lidiji što me inspirirala na ideju bojanke i svu ljubav i potporu koju mi je pružila;

Hvala prijatelju Miguelu što je provodio vrijeme sa mnom igrajući Valheim i dajući inspiraciju;

Hvala prijatelju Karlu što me je uputio pravim smjerom u nordijsku mitologiju;

I naposljetku, hvala svim ostalim prijateljima i profesorima na potpori, prenesenim iskustvima i znanjima koja su mi pomogla da dođem do ovog trenutka života.



Slika 25: Skål!



IZJAVA O AUTORSTVU
I
SUGLASNOST ZA JAVNU OBJAVU

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(vlastoručni potpis)

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7. Prilozi

Uz završni rad prilažem primjerak knjige „Norse colouring odyssey: A colouring book inspired by Norse myths, tales and legends“.

NORSE
COLOURING ODYSSEY



A COLOURING BOOK INSPIRED BY NORSE
MYTHS, TALES AND LEGENDS

THE CREATION

Before there was soil, or sky, or any green thing, there was only the gaping abyss of Ginnungagap. This chaos of perfect silence and darkness lay between the homeland of elemental fire, Muspelheim (south), guarded by Surt with his flaming sword and the homeland of elemental ice, Niflheim (north), the freezing land of fog. Frost from Niflheim and billowing flames from Muspelheim crept toward each other until they met in Ginnungagap. Amid the hissing and sputtering, the fire melted the ice, and the drops formed themselves into Ymir, the first of the frost giants. While he was sleeping, the sweat from his left armpit formed two children, and his legs formed a six-headed son. From them descended the frost giants.

As the frost continued to melt, a cow, Audumbla, emerged from it. She fed Ymir with her milk. She sustained herself by licking the salty rocks surrounding herself and Ymir. On the first day that she licked the stones, she uncovered a hair of a man. On the second day his whole head appeared and on the third day he was completely uncovered. His name was Buri and he had a son named Bor, who married Bestla, the daughter of the giant Bolthorn. The half-god, half-giant children of Bor and Bestla were Odin, Vili and Ve.

Odin and his brothers killed Ymir and set about constructing the world from his corpse. They fashioned the oceans from his blood, the land from his flesh, the mountains from his bones, the rocks from his teeth, vegetation from his hair, clouds from his brains, and the sky from his skull. Four dwarves, corresponding to the four cardinal points, held Ymir's skull aloft above the earth called North, South, East and West.

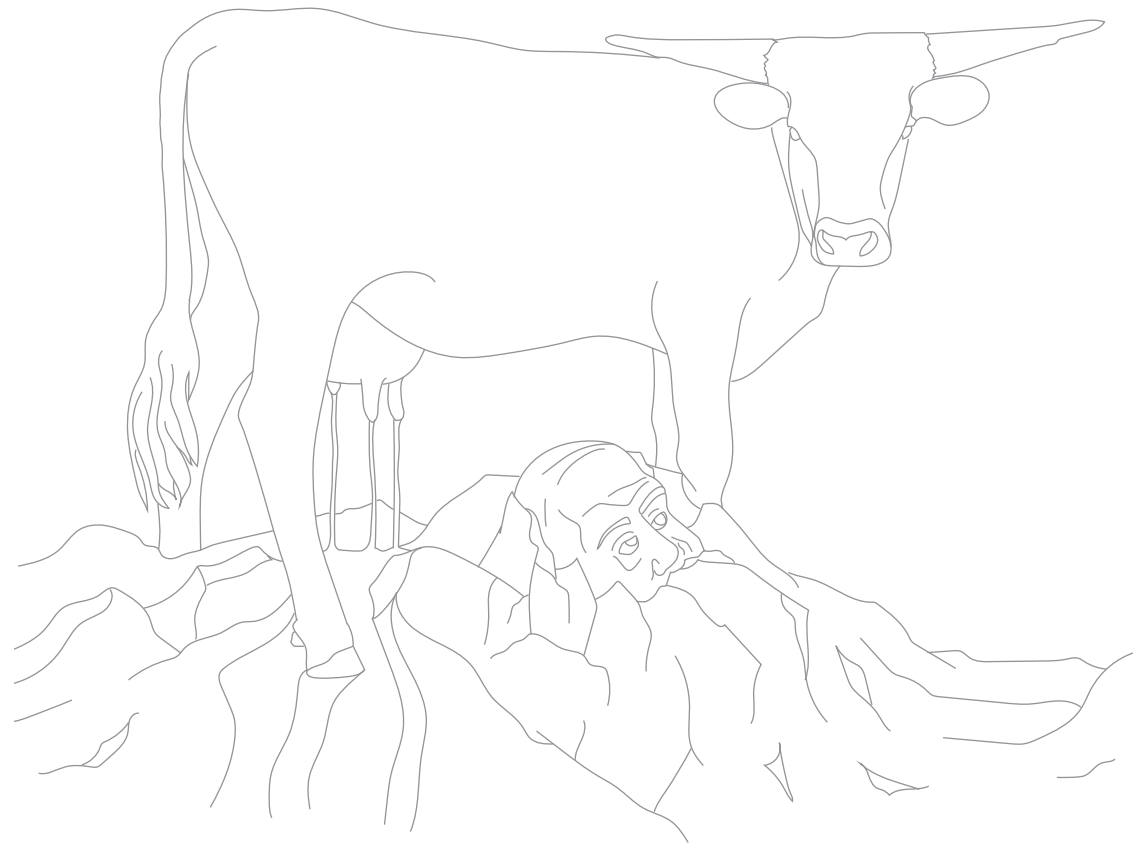
The gods eventually formed the first man and woman, Ask and Embla, from two tree trunks, and built a fence around their dwelling-place, Midgard, to protect them from the giants.



FROST GIANT, YMIR



ԱՄԲԼԱ



THE FIRST HUMANS, ASK & EMBLA



THE WAR OF THE AESIR AND VANIR

Odin did not extend a friendly welcome to the witch Gullveig when she came to visit him. In his hall the High One and many other Aesir listened with loathing as she talked of nothing but her love of gold, her lust of gold. They thought that the worlds would be better off without her and angrily seized and tortured her; they riddled her body with spears.

Then the Aesir hurled Gullveig on to the fire in the middle of the hall. She was burned to death; but out of the flames she stepped whole and reborn. Three times Aesir burned Gullveig's body and three times she lived again.

Then wherever she went, and she went everywhere, into every hall, Gullveig was given another name. The awed Aesir and their servants called her Heid, the gleaming one. She was a seer; she enchanted wands of wood; she went into trances and cast spells; she was mistress of evil magic, the delight of every evil woman.

When the Vanir heard how the Aesir had welcomed Gullveig, they were incensed as the Aesir had been by Gullveig's gold lust; they swore vengeance and began to prepare for war. But there was noting that escaped Odin when he sat in his high seat in Valaskjalf; the Aesir, too, sharpened their spears and polished their shields. Very soon the gods moved against each other and Odin cast his spear into the host of the Vanir. That was the beginning of the first war in the world.

At first the Vanir gained ground. They used spells and reduced the towering walls of Asgard to rubble. But the Aesir fought back and surged forward and caused no less damage in Vanaheim – the world of Vanir. For a long time the battle raged on, and the longer it lasted the clearer it became that neither side was likely to win.





Then the gods on both sides grew weary of war. Talk and truce seemed better than such turmoil. So leaders of the Aesir and the Vanir met to discuss terms. They argued about the war's origins and whether the Aesir alone were guilty of causing the war or whether both sides were entitled to tribute. The end of the discussion was that the Aesir and Vanir swore to live side by side in peace, and agreed to exchange leaders as proof of their intentions.

So two leading Vanir, Njord and his son Freyr, made their way to Asgard. Njord's daughter, Freyja, journeyed with them, and so did Kvasir, wisest of the Vanir. The Aesir welcomed and accepted them, much as they disliked the fact that Freyr and Freyja were the children of Njord by his own sister. They appointed Njord and Freyr as high priests to preside over sacrifices, and Freyja was consecrated a sacrificial priestess. She soon taught the Aesir all the witchcraft that was well known and in common use in Vanaheim.

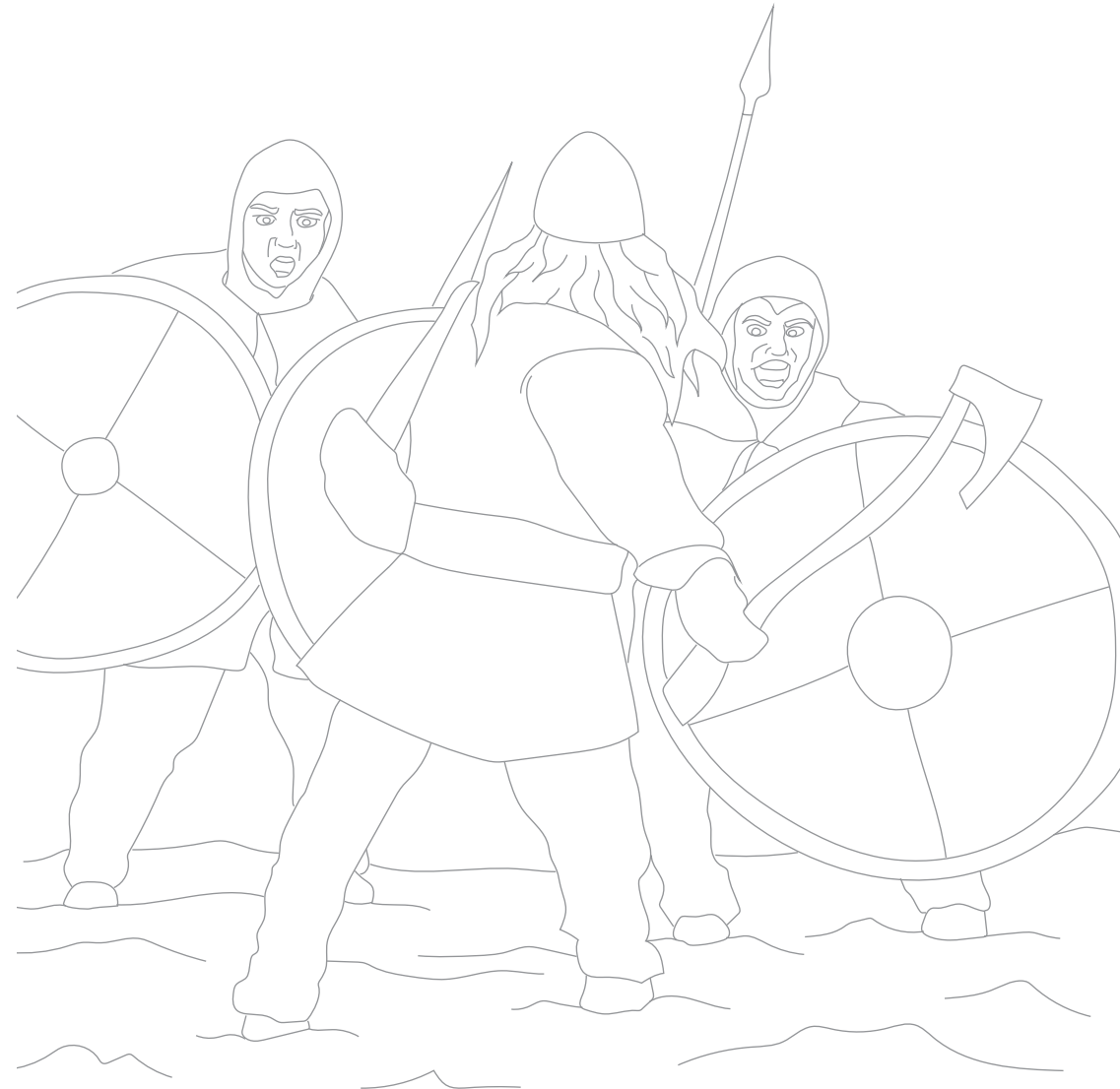
For their part, the Aesir sent long-legged Honir and wise Mimir to live in Vanaheim. Honir was well built and handsome, a figure of substance. The Aesir thought he would make an enviable leader in war and peace alike. Mimir, like Kvasir, was held to be second to none in his understanding and wisdom.

The Vanir welcomed and accepted them. They at once appointed Honir to be one of their leader, and Mimir stood at his right hand. Always ready with shrewd advice. Together they were unfailing. When Honir was separated from Mimir, though, things were rather different. Standing alone in a council or meeting, and asked for his opinion, Honir's reply was always the same: "Well, let the others decide."

The Vanir began to suspect that the Aesir had tricked them and that they had got very much the worse in the exchange of leaders. And soon their suspicion turned to outright anger and thoughts of revenge. They sized wise Mimir and threw him to the ground and hacked off his head. They told one of their messengers to take it back to those who had so thoughtfully send it: Odin and the Aesir.

Odin and Mimir's head had cradled it. He smeared it with herbs to preserve it, so that it would never decay. And then the High One sang charms over it and gave back to Mimir's head the power of speech. So it's wisdom became Odin's wisdom – many truths unknown to any other being.

THE FIRST WAR



THE BUILDING OF ASGARD'S WALL

A certain smith arrived at Asgard one day and offered to build the gods a high wall around their home to protect them from any who might wish them ill. The smith (certainly a giant himself) said he could complete his work in a mere three seasons, but demanded a steep compensation: the hand of the goddess Freya in marriage, as well as the sun and moon.

The gods took counsel together. Freya was adamantly against the giant's terms from the start. But Loki suggested that the builder should obtain that which he desired, although only if he could complete his work in a single winter, with no aid from anyone but his horse. After much deliberation, the gods consented to Loki's plan. Of course, the gods had no intention of actually giving Freya away, nor the sun or the moon; they thought that the task they demanded was impossible.

The giant smith, however, agreed to their terms, provided that the gods swear oaths to ensure that, if their conditions were met, they would fulfill their end of the bargain, and that he himself would be safe in Asgard while he worked.

The builder set about constructing the wall, and the gods marveled at how quickly the structure was raised. What was even more perplexing to them was that the giant's stallion, Svadilfari ("Unlucky Traveler") seemed to be doing almost twice as much work as the smith himself, hauling enormous boulders over considerable distances to add to the edifice. When the end of winter was only three days ahead, the wall was strong enough to be impenetrable by almost any enemy, and – alarmingly – lacking little before it was finished. Only the stones around the gate had yet to be put in place.

The anxious gods seized Loki and rebuked him for giving them such foul advice. They threatened him with death if he couldn't find a way to prevent the giant from finishing his task and making off with their beloved goddess Freya and the sun and moon, bringing neverending darkness and dreariness to the Nine Worlds. Loki pleaded with the gods to spare his life, and swore an oath that he would do as the gods desired, come what may.





That night, the giant and Svadilfari ventured into the snow-draped forest in search of stones. Along their way, a mare, who was none other than Loki in disguise, whinnied to the stallion from a short distance away. When the stallion saw the mare, his heart wasn't the only organ that was roused by delight and lust, and he snapped his reins and bounded into the woods after her. The mare ran all night, and all night Svadilfari chased after her. When morning came, the giant's horse was still missing, and the now-despairing giant knew that there was no way that he could now finish the wall in time.

The Aesir then paid the giant the wages they deemed he deserved: a fatal blow from Thor's hammer, which shattered his head into pieces no bigger than breadcrumbs.

Meanwhile, deep in the forest, Svadilfari had caught up with Loki, who soon gave birth to a gray, eight-legged horse – Sleipnir, who became the steed of Odin.

THE GIANT SMITH & SVADILFARI



THE LORD OF THE HANGED

Sitting on his throne, Hlidskjalf, with Frigg in the hall of Valhalla, Odin looked out across the whole world. But he wanted to know everything and gain wisdom and knowledge of things hidden from him. This was a desire that drove him to sacrifice himself.

He sacrificed his eye in Mimir's well and he threw himself on his spear Gungnir in a kind of symbolic, ritual suicide. He then hanged himself in Yggdrasil, the tree of life, for nine days and nine nights in order to gain knowledge of other worlds and be able to understand the runes.

During his sacrificial actions, he saw visions and received secret wisdom.

The magical knowledge he gained made him able to cure the sick, calm storms, turn weapons against his attackers, make women fall in love and render dangerous troll women harmless – often just with a look.

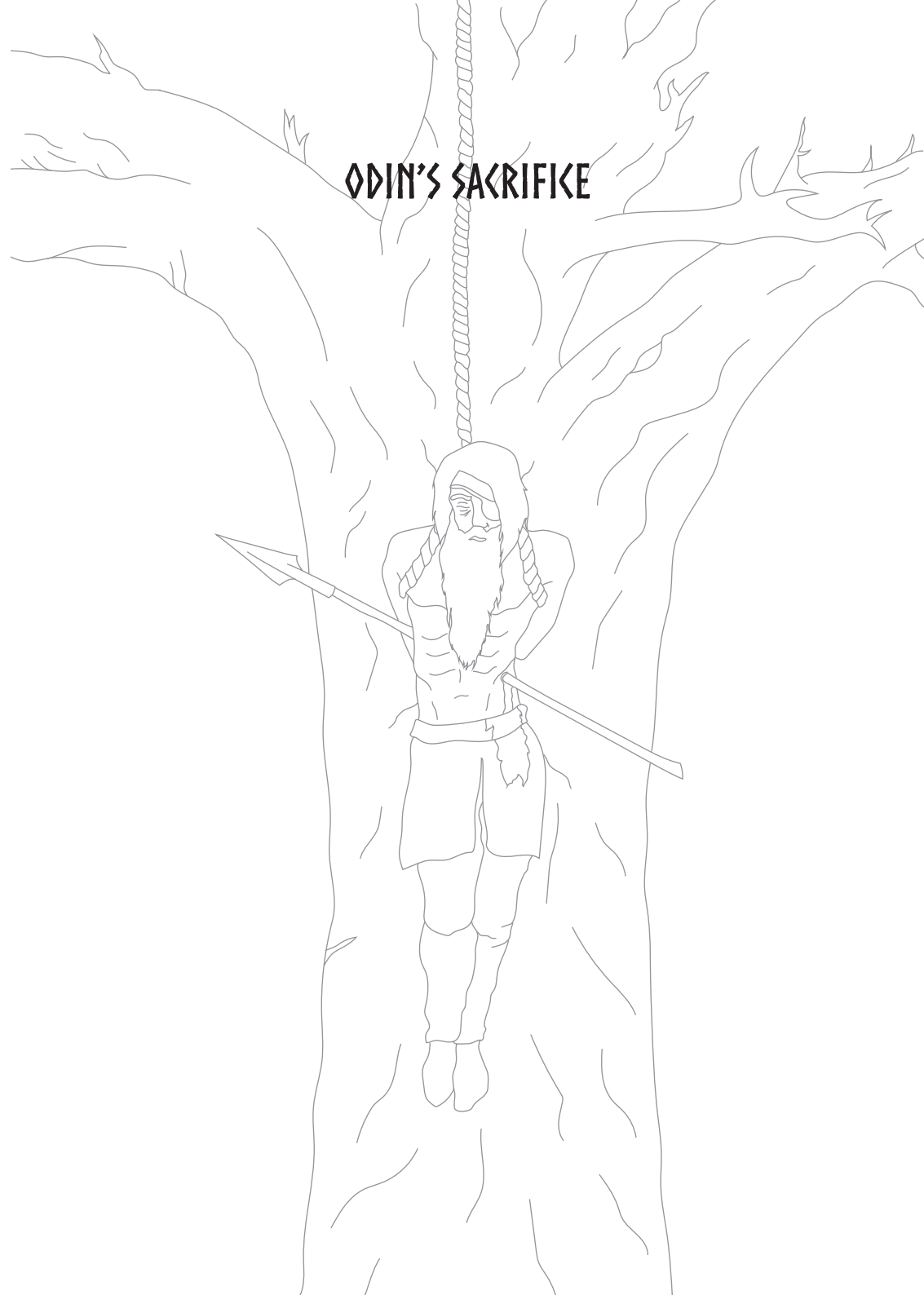
Odin was also a shapeshifter. He could fall into an ecstatic trance and send out his soul, allowing him to adopt the form of another person or an animal.

While his body lay in a trance, he could travel as a bird or a four-legged animal, a fish or a snake, through all the worlds and to far-off places.

Odin is often portrayed as a charming man who enjoys drinking mead and wine. But he was accused of “unmanly behaviour” when he “beat the drum and practised prophecy”, something that was associated with women. The fact that he was a seer and a man provoked disgust in some quarters.



ODIN'S SACRIFICE



LOKI'S CHILDREN AND THE BINDING OF FENRIR

Fenrir was the eldest of three children between Loki and the giantess Angrboda. He was also called the Fenris Wolf. Fenrir took the form of a wolf while his younger brother Jormungandr took the form of a serpent, and his younger sister Hel was half alive and half dead.

The gods feared them all and captured them in middle of the night from Angrboda's hall. The gods then brought the three monsters back to Asgard where they threw Jormungandr into the ocean and Hel into Niflheim where she rules until Ragnarok. They kept Fenrir in Asgard so that they might keep an eye on him.

Fenrir grew so large and fierce that only Tyr was brave enough to feed him. After some time the gods decided to bind Fenrir, as killing was forbidden in Asgard. So they made a chain of iron links called Laeding and challenged Fenrir to be bound by it to see if he was stronger than the chain. Fenrir took the challenge and broke the bonds with no problem.

The gods then quickly made another chain from larger links, larger than even anchor chains, and they called it Dromi. The gods then took it to Fenrir and challenged him to break that chain. He too broke it with no problem, for he had grown even stronger since his breaking of Laeding. The gods were truly frightened after Fenrir broke Dromi that Odin sent Frey's servant Skirnir out into the nine worlds to find someone to make a chain strong enough to bind the giant wolf.

Skirnir then went to the land of the dwarfs in Svartalfheim where they made a silk rope called Gleipnir. Gleipnir was made from the sound a cat makes when it moves, a woman's beard, the roots of a mountain, the sinews of a bear, the breath of a fish and a bird's spittle. That is why these things are very rare in the world today.



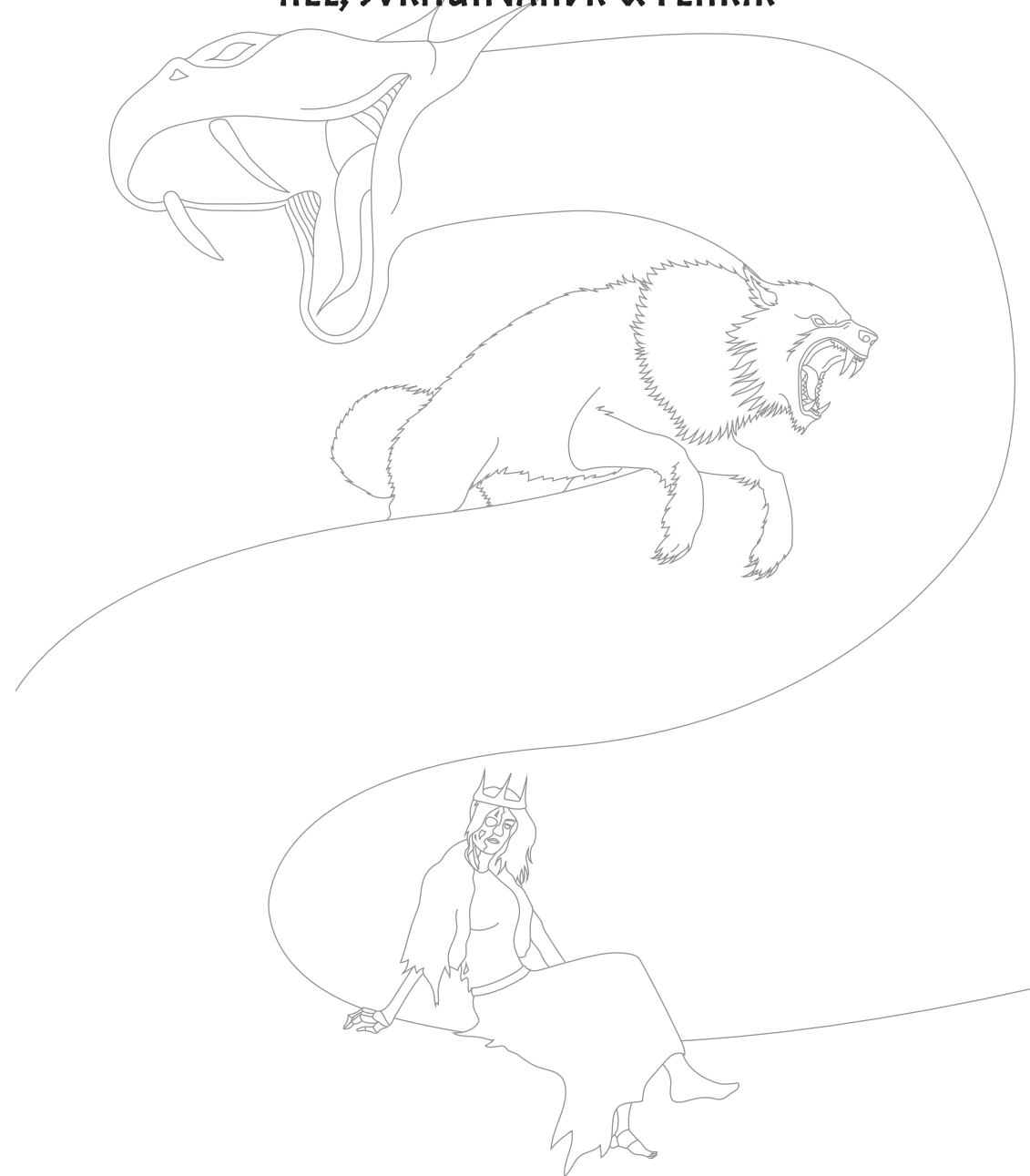


Skirnir then returned to Asgard with the silk rope and gave it to Odin, where he and a group of gods invited Fenrir to break it on the island of Lyngvi in middle of Lake Amsvartnir. Fenrir took the challenge but when he saw Gleipnir, he suspected that magic was involved and hesitated until Tyr offered to place his right hand into Fenrir's mouth. Fenrir was bound, but when he could not break the rope, he bit Tyr's hand off.

The gods then took a chain called Gelgja and tied it to Gleipnir, then tied Gelgja to a boulder called Gjoll and drove Gjoll one mile into the earth. After that was done, they placed an even larger boulder called Thviti on top of Gjoll. The gods then gaged Fenrir with a sword, it's tip on the roof of Fenrir's mouth and the hilt on his lower jaw, and that is where he will be until Ragnarok.

When Ragnarok comes, Fenrir's chain will break, and he will join his father, brother, sister and the giants in the mighty battle that will end the nine worlds. Fenrir and Odin will be the first to engage into battle, but in the end he will swallow Odin, killing the Allfather. Odin's son Vidar will then come forward to tear Fenrir apart avenging his father and killing the wolf son of Loki.

HEL, JORMUNGANDR & FENRIR



THE THEFT OF IDUNN'S APPLES

Idunn is the goddess of eternal youth and is the wife of Bragi, the god of poetry. Idunn keeps the golden apples that maintain the eternal youthfulness of the gods. Since the gods are not immortal, the apples are considered very precious.

One summer day, Odin, Loki, and Hoenir were walking across Midgard. Hungry at the end of the day, they came upon a herd of oxen. Loki slaughtered one while Odin and Hoenir built a fire. After roasting the meat for what seemed like a long time, the meat was just as raw as when they put it in the fire.

A large eagle perched in a tree observed all this and proposed a bargain. If the gods would let the eagle eat first, the ox would be cooked.

The gods agreed, seeing no alternative. The eagle swooped down and snatched the lion's share of the ox from the fire. Landing nearby, the eagle began to eat greedily. Loki was so angry at the theft of their evening meal that he rammed his staff into the eagle's body.

The eagle flew off at great speed. Loki found to his dismay that the staff was firmly lodged in the body of the eagle and that he was unable to release his hands from the staff. The eagle flew low enough to make certain that Loki's ride was uncomfortable. His legs banged into boulders and he was nearly ripped in two.

Loki begged for quarter. The eagle said he would release Loki only if Loki would swear to bring Idunn and her apples out of Asgard. Now, Loki knew that the eagle could only be a giant in disguise. Crazy with pain, he swore the oath.



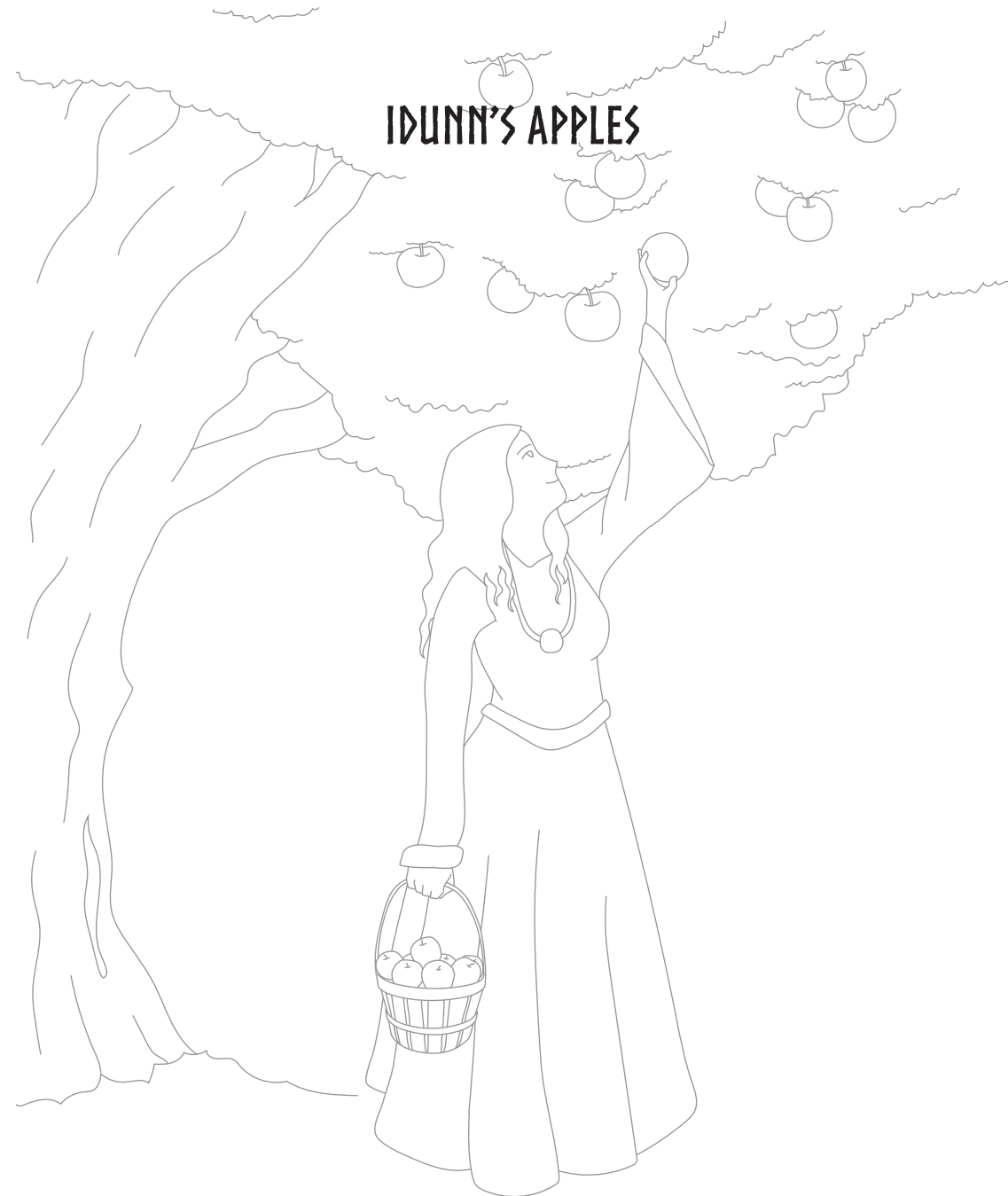
Back in Asgard, Loki convinced Idunn to travel with him to Midgard. The giant Thjazi, again wearing an eagle skin, swooped down and carried Idunn and her apples off to his castle in the mountains of Jötenheim, land of the giants. Here, Thjazi alone would enjoy the apples.

Idunn's absence was quickly noted in Asgard. Without Idunn's apples, the gods and goddesses began to grow old and gray, and their powers declined. Gathering his remaining strength, Odin called the gods to council. Someone remembered that Idunn was last seen with Loki. The gods sought out Loki and bound him, demanding that he finds a way to return Idunn and her apples or else face death at the hands of the gods.

Loki agreed to make the journey to find Idunn and her apples. Using a hawk skin to fly, he traveled to Thjazi's castle in Jötenheim, where he found Idunn alone, huddled over a smoky fire. Saying the magic words, he turned Idunn into a nut. Grasping the nut between his claws, Loki flew off, back to Asgard.

Thjazi, returning to the castle from fishing, found Idunn gone. He knew that only one of the gods could have stolen her back. He donned his eagle skin for a third time, and flew to give chase.

Back at Asgard, the gods could see the hawk struggling to outrun the eagle. Realizing the situation, they piled wood shavings and kindling against the wall of Asgard. Loki and Idunn flew over the wall as the gods ignited the wood. The eagle could not avoid the flames, and his wings were destroyed. He fell to the ground in torment, and the gods quickly killed the eagle.



LOKI AND THE EAGLE



THE MARRIAGE OF NJORD AND SKADI

While the gods were celebrating their slaying of the giant Thjazi and the return of the youth-giving goddess Idunn to their halls, an unannounced visitor stormed into their merrymaking.

This was the giantess Skadi, who had arrived with armor and weapons to avenge the death of Thjazi, her father. The gods were patient with her, and convinced her to accept reparations instead of seeking vengeance.

These reparations came in three parts. First, Odin took Thjazi's eyes and ceremoniously cast them into the night sky, where they became two stars.

Second, the gods were to make Skadi laugh. After many feats were tried, none succeeded in bringing a smile to the grim face of the giantess. At last, Loki tied one end of a rope to a goat and the other end around his testicles and began a game of tug of war with the goat. Each screeched and howled in turn, until at last Loki fell over into Skadi's lap. The giantess couldn't help but chuckle.

Third, Skadi was to be given a god of her choosing in marriage, but she was to select him by the sight of his legs and feet alone. She picked the fairest pair of legs she could see, thinking them to be those of Baldur. However, as it turned out, they were those of the sea-god Njord.

After Skadi and Njord's magnificent wedding, it came time for the couple to decide where to live. Njord's home was Noatun ("The Place of Ships"), a bright, warm place on the beach. Skadi's home couldn't have been more different: it was Thrymheim ("Thunder-Home"), a dark, foreboding place in the highest mountain peaks where the snow never melts.



The pair first spent nine nights in Thrymheim. When this time had passed and they made their way down from the mountains, Njord declared that, although brief, his time in Thrymheim had been loathsome. He had been particularly dismayed by the sounds of the wolves, to which he overwhelmingly preferred the songs of the swans to which he was accustomed.

After the two had slept for nine nights in Noatun, Skadi had similar opinions to express regarding the sunny home of Njord. The cries of the seabirds had been unbearably abrasive to her ears, and she had found it impossible to sleep. So she departed for the mountains, and the two parted ways.

NJORD & SKADI



THE TREASURE OF THE GODS

As a lark, Loki cut off the long golden hair of Sif, the wife of Thor, one night while she slept. In his rage, Thor demanded that Loki replace the hair, or else he would break every bone in Loki's body.

Loki traveled to Níðavellir, the land of the dwarves, where he found the two dwarf sons of Ivaldi. They agreed to fabricate hair from gold, as fine as Sif's own hair, and with the magical ability to grow on her head. Once completed, they decided to make additional gifts to please and placate the gods.

For Freyr, they made the ship Skíðbladnir, which is always wafted by favorable winds, and which can sail on air as well as water. Not only can it hold all the gods and their mounts, it can be folded up and put in one's purse. For Odin, they made the spear Gungnir, which never fails in its aim.

Loki was so pleased that he declared the sons of Ivald the most clever of smiths. The two dwarf brothers Brokk and Eitri overheard. Brokk wagered Loki that Eitri could make three items that surpassed the three that Loki held. Loki agreed to the wager, with the stakes being the loser's head.

Brokk worked the bellows while Eitri worked the forge. Eitri reminded Brokk that the bellows must be worked continuously without interruption to insure success. While Brokk pumped, Loki changed into a fly and tormented

Brokk in attempt to force him to stop, and thus ruin the piece. Brokk was able to resist Loki's torments while Eitri made Gullin-börsti, the enormously fast golden boar for Freyr, and while Eitri made Draupnir, the gold arm ring for Odin that drops eight similar rings every ninth night.



But while Eitri was working the iron for a hammer, Loki stung Brokk above the eye, causing a torrent of blood. Brokk stopped pumping for only a moment to wipe away the blood, but the damage had been done. The hammer Mjöllnir, while still possessing its magic, was short in the handle.

Despite the mishap, Brokk was still certain of winning the wager. Together with Loki, the dwarves traveled to Asgard and presented their treasures to the Aesir. The gods agreed that Brokk had won the wager. Loki fled at the thought of losing his head, but he was overtaken by Thor and returned to Brokk. As Brokk approached to take Loki's head, Loki pointed out that while Brokk had a claim on Loki's head, he had none on Loki's neck. The Aesir had to agree.

Brokk, denied full vengeance, decided that since Loki's head was his, he could stop Loki's glib talk. Using Eitri's awl, Brokk sewed Loki's lips shut with a leather thong.

After a time of silence, Loki managed to cut the thong and make plans for revenge.

MJÖLLNIR



THE NECKLACE OF BRISINGS

Freya loved jewelry, and she had a necklace that was made by four dwarfs, with such an art it gleamed in the sky. The name Brisingamen means flaming and glowing. When it was around Freya's neck, it became their symbol of heaven and earth fruits.

One day Freya walked by a cave with dwarfs and wandered in. When she was inside her eye caught the sight of the most beautiful necklace, she had ever seen. The four dwarfs living in the cave were just putting the finishing touches on the necklace. Freya pleaded and begged to have the necklace. She told them that she would pay any amount of gold for it. The dwarfs refused to sell it but they made a suggestion. If Freya would spend one night with each of the dwarfs she could have the necklace. She agreed to spend the next four nights with each of the ugly dwarfs.

Loki had followed Freya to the cave where the dwarfs were at and seen everything that happened. Loki ran back and told Odin, when he heard the story he got furious and ordered Loki to take the necklace away. Loki turned into a fly and snuck in her house, but saw that she had the necklace fastened around her neck so he turned into a flea and bit the goddess on her cheek. She turned restlessly and exposed the necklace. Loki turned himself back into his own shape, took the necklace and brought it back to Odin. When the goddess found out that she had lost her necklace she ran to Odin crying bitterly and told her story. Angry with Freya's selfish story he said that he would only return the necklace if she would agree to stir up a war between two mighty chiefs in Midgard. After Freya should bring the slain heroes back to life.

Freya willingly agreed to his terms, because like Odin, she had a liking for battles and heroes. Then Odin asked for a messenger to inform Loki to bring back Freya's necklace. Loki turned himself into a swan and swam to a rock where he had hidden the necklace. A moment later Heimdall had become a seal and went after the necklace too. The two fought a fierce battle and in the end Heimdall with the necklace in his hand led the dripping Loki out of the water and back to Odin.



FREYA



THE LAY OF THRYM

Thor wakes up one morning to find that all is not right with the world. His magical hammer, Mjollnir, is missing. Convinced that the theft is just one of Loki's usual pranks, he finds the trickster god and demands to know where his hammer is. Loki insists he didn't take Thor's hammer. He's pretty sure he knows who did, though, and he has a plan.

Thor asks Freya if Loki can borrow her robe. It's a magical feather dress that gives the wearer the wings of a bird. With whirring noises, Loki departs for Jotunheim, the land of the giants (called Jotun). In Jotunheim, Loki finds the frost-giant Thrym sitting on a mound braiding golden leashes for his dogs and stroking the manes of his horses in a creepy sort of way. When Loki tells Thrym that Thor's hammer is missing, the giant admits to hiding it eight miles below the earth.

In exchange for returning the hammer, Thrym explains, he wants Freya, the most beautiful goddess in Asgard, for his wife. Loki flies back to Asgard and breaks the bad news to Thor. Right away, Thor insists on finding Freya. He tells her to put on a wedding dress. She's got to marry Thrym. Freya is totally offended that Thor would even suggest such a thing. All the gods hold a council to discuss how they're going to get Thor's hammer back. The watchman god, Heimdall, suggests that Thor put on a wedding dress, some gemstones, Freya's special necklace, and some keys. In other words, Thor should dress up as Freya and travel to Jotunheim to get his hammer back himself.

Thor's not thrilled about that plan. He's sure that all the gods will call him un-manly if he does that. Loki tells Thor to suck it up. If he doesn't get his hammer back from the giants, they'll use it to take over Asgard. Reluctantly, Thor allows the gods to dress him in a wedding gown and deck him out with gemstones, keys that rattle, and Freya's special necklace, Brisingamen. Loki decides that he'll go with Thor to Jotunheim as a bridesmaid. Thor calls for his goat-driven chariot.



After much thunder and lightning, Loki and Thor arrive in Jotunheim. When Thrym sees them coming, he instructs his servants to deck the halls, for Freya's on her way to marry him. Thrym brags about all the shiny cows and gemstones he owns, and muses that, now that he has Freya, he's got everything a giant could ever want.

Fast-forward to the wedding feast: Thor eats an entire ox, eight salmon, three barrels of mead, and the entire wedding cake. Thrym's totally impressed, and a little bit surprised, since he's never seen a woman eat so much. Loki excuses the "bride's" monstrous appetite to Thrym by explaining that she was so excited about her marriage to him that she fasted for eight days in a row.

Eager to kiss his bride, Thrym lifts her veil and immediately leaps back in horror. His bride's eyes, he says, are fiery red! Loki explains that the bride's been so excited about her marriage to Thrym that she hasn't slept for eight days straight.

Thrym's sister appears in front of "Freya," demanding the bridal fee, a payment the bride and her family owe the man who marries her. She tells "Freya" to take the rings off her fingers. Now it's time for Thrym to fulfill his side of the bargain. He instructs his servants to bring in Thor's hammer, Mjollnir, and lay it in the bride's lap to "bless" her.

Thor's heart leaps in his chest when he sees his hammer placed in front of him. Immediately picking it up, he kills Thrym and the giant's entire household. Instead of a bridal fee in shillings, Thrym's sister gets smashed in the head.

That's how Thor gets his hammer back.

THE LAY OF THRYM



THE LAY OF VAFTHRUNDIR

One day Odin announced that he was going to visit Vafthrudnir, wisest of giants, and though Frigg said that she would rather he not, he went anyway, wanting to test his wits against the giant. He came upon the hall of Vafthrudnir at the mouth of a valley, surrounded of three purple mountains. Odin entered and greeted the giant, asking if he is really as wise as he heard, but the giant asked who he was and warned that Odin would not be able to leave unless he was wiser than the giant. The Allfather responded that he was Gagnrad and requested a drink. The giant invited him to sit and said they would soon have a battle of wits.

Vafthrudnir quickly asked what the name of the steed was that draws Day across the sky and Gagnrad easily answered Skinfaxi. The giant asked what steed it was that drew Night and Gagnrad answered Hrimfaxi. Gagnrad answered Wing when Vafthrudnir asked what river divided Asgard and Jotunheim, and Vigrid for the name of the field where Surt and the gods will meet to fight.

The giant commented that Gagnrad was very wise and posed the contest that whoever lost would forfeit his life. Gagnrad accepted and prepared for the battle. They asked and answered riddles ranging from creation to what shall happen in Ragnarok.

Finally Gagnrad asked what Odin whispered to Baldr before he burned his pyre. The giant recognized Odin then and answered that no one knew this. In the final minutes of his life the giant admitted that Odin was always going to be the wiser.



VAFTHRUNDIR



THOR'S JOURNEY TO UTGARD

While Thor and Loki were traveling far from Asgard in Thor's goat-drawn chariot, night overtook them and they were welcomed into the house of a farmer and his family.

To repay his hosts for their hospitality, Thor offered his goats for supper, knowing that he could bring them back to life afterwards and not be at any loss. After the meal, Thor laid the goats' hides on the floor and instructed his hosts to place the bones on the hides after the meat had been gleaned from them.


The farmer had two children: a boy named Thjalfi and a daughter named Roskva. Despite the thunder god's instructions, Thjalfi broke open one of the goats' leg bones to suck out the marrow before placing it on the hide with the others.

When Thor awoke the following morning, he hallowed the goat hides and bones with his hammer, whereupon the goats sprang back to life. One of them, however, had a lame hind leg. Thor immediately intuited the reason for this, and was so furious at the farmer and his family that he would have slain them all on the spot had the farmer not offered him his children, Thjalfi and Roskva, to be his servants. Thor accepted, and he, Loki, and the children pressed onward on foot, leaving the handicapped goats behind.

The party's goal was to reach Jotunheim, the land of the giants. They crossed an ocean and a thick, tangled forest. Just as night was falling, they came to a huge hall. They found no one inside, and decided to spend the night there.

They were jostled awake by a great earthquake. Running outside, they found a sleeping giant whose snores caused the earth to rumble and shake. Thor, who hated giants, clutched his hammer and resolved to smite this sure foe of his. But the giant awoke at the last second and seemed to be cheered, or at least amused, by the sight of Thor and his companions. The giant introduced himself as Skrymir (Old Norse Skrímir, "Boaster"), but said that he already knew full well to whom he was introducing himself.





Skrymir picked up his glove, the great hall in which Thor and his company had slept during the night, and proposed that he accompany them on their journey. To this the god agreed, and off they went through forests and over hills.

At night, they took shelter beneath a venerable oak. Skrymir had been carrying all of their provisions in his bag, and when the giant fell asleep and the task of opening the bag fell to Thor, the god found himself unable to untie the giant's knots. This so angered Thor that he struck the dozing Skrymir in the forehead, hoping to kill him. The giant awoke calmly and asked if a leaf had fallen on his head.

Later in the night, the giant's snores grew so loud they echoed through the valleys like thunder. Thor, annoyed by his inability to sleep, and wanting to kill the giant anyway, tried a second time to smite him by striking him in the head. But, much as before, Skrymir awakened and asked if an acorn had fallen on his head.

Just before dawn, Thor decided to try one more time to end Skrymir's life. But the giant, awakened, asked if some birds had roosted above him and shaken some dirt from the branches onto his face.

Skrymir departed from Thor and his companions, and the company pressed onward toward a castle called Utgard. Around midday, the travelers reached their destination. The gate was locked and no one was there to open it, but Thor and the others found that they could fit through the very large spaces between the bars of the gate easily enough. Once inside, they found a hall where men sat eating and drinking. Amongst them was the king of this castle, the giant Utgarda-Loki (Old Norse Utgarda-Loki, "Loki of the Útgardr"), who immediately recognized his new guests and set about taunting them for their diminutive size.

Wanting to salvage his dignity and that of his companions, Loki proudly asserted that no one else in this castle could eat food faster than he could. Utgarda-Loki challenged him to prove this boast by entering a contest with one of the men there, whose name was Logi (Old Norse Logi, "Fire").

A trough of meat was set before them, with Loki at one end and Logi at the other, and they were to see who could reach the middle first. They met in the middle at the same time, but while Loki had eaten all of the meat between the end and the middle, Logi had eaten the meat, the bones, and even the trough itself! Loki had clearly lost.

Thjalfi, who was an extremely swift runner, then offered to race anyone in the castle. Utgarda-Loki led him out to a race track and appointed one Hugi (Old Norse Hugi, "Thought") to compete with him. By the time Hugi reached the finish line, he was so far ahead of Thjalfi that he doubled back to meet his contestant. They raced a second time, and once again Hugi beat Thjalfi by a long bow-shot. Still, they raced a third time, but Thjalfi fared even worse; he was still at the midpoint of the track by the time Hugi finished.

Thor then challenged anyone in the castle to a drinking contest, something at which he had no little skill. Utgarda-Loki had one of his servants fetch the kind of drinking horn from which Utgarda-Loki's men were said to drink. When it was placed before Thor, Utgarda-Loki informed him that whoever could finish the horn in one drink was considered a great drinker, whoever could do it in two was considered fair, but no one in his retinue was such a poor drinker as to be unable to finish it in three.

Thor drank mightily, but by the time he had to pause for a breath, the level of liquor in the horn had barely lowered. So he gave it a second try, straining to gulp and gulp until his breath failed him. This time, the level had gone down appreciably, but the better part of the horn still remained. His third drink was even more formidable than the previous two, but in the end, much was still left. By that point, however, Thor could drink no more, and gave up.

Then Utgarda-Loki suggested that Thor attempt to simply lift his cat from the floor, but Thor proved unable to do even this.

In a rage, Thor challenged anyone in the castle to wrestle with him. Insultingly, Utgarda-Loki appointed an old woman, Elli (Old Norse Elli, "Age") who was one of his servants. But the great god lost even this contest. After this, Utgarda-Loki decided that there should be no more contests, and the company spent the night there in the castle.

In the morning, they rose and prepared to leave. After Utgarda-Loki had shown them out of the castle, he confided to them what had actually transpired in their contests, saying to Thor, "Now that you have left my castle, I shall see to it that you never enter it again. The knot on my provision bag that you almost succeeded in untying had been wrought in iron. I deflected the blows you attempted to inflict on me with your hammer; instead of my face, you hit the mountainside, and carved three gaping valleys into it. Had you struck me, I would have been killed then and there."

“Loki held his own remarkably well in his eating contest, since his opponent was none other than fire itself. So it was with Thjalfi, too – he raced against thought, which nobody could ever hope to outrun. The far end of the horn from which you drank was connected to the sea, and we were actually greatly afraid that you were going to drink it all. When you cross over the sea again, you will see how much you have lowered its level. My cat was actually the Midgard serpent, whom you succeeded in raising out of the ocean and into the sky. And, finally, you wrestled against old age, and took a long, long time to fall.

“Now, for your sake and for ours, leave, and never come back.”

Thor was so angered by this humiliating trickery that he raised his hammer and prepared to slay Utgarda-Loki and smash his castle to pieces. But when he turned to do so he saw no giant and no castle – just a vast, empty plain.

UTGARDA-LOKI'S CHALLENGES



THOR'S DUEL WITH HRUNGNIR

Hrungnir (“The Brawler”) was the mightiest of all of the giants, the spirits of darkness, winter, night, and the grave, who are often the enemies of the gods.


One day Hrungnir was paid a visit in Jotunheim, the homeland of the giants, by Odin. Hrungnir didn’t recognize the god at first, and instead wondered aloud who this stranger might be whose horse could ride through the air and the water, as he had seen the horse do at the god’s approach. Odin bet his head that his horse – none other than the eight-legged shamanic steed Sleipnir – could outrun any horse in Jotunheim. Hrungnir was insulted by this provocation, and straightaway accepted the bet and mounted his own horse, Gullfaxi (“Golden-Mane”).

The two raced through mud and streams, over steep, rocky hills, and between the trees in thick woodlands. Before the giant realized it, he had passed through the gates of Asgard, the home of the gods. And, of course, he still hadn’t caught up with Odin and Sleipnir. The gods, seemingly in good cheer, invited him to drink with them.

After he had become drunk, he became belligerent, and boasted that he would kill all of the gods except for the Freya and Sif, the wife of Thor. These two lovely goddesses he would carry back to Jotunheim with him. Freya alone was stout of heart enough to continue filling his horn. Next he bellowed that he would drink every last drop of the gods’ ale. The gods soon grew tired of his anger and sent for Thor, who had been elsewhere fighting other giants.

When Thor arrived and discovered the situation, he lifted his hammer and prepared to slay Hrungnir there on the spot. The bellicose (and yet, we may suspect, inwardly fearful) giant accused Thor of cowardice for intending to kill someone who was himself unarmed. “Your name would be held in far higher honor,” the giant declared, “if you will accept my challenge to a duel!” Never one to lose an opportunity to gain renown and prove his abilities, Thor accepted.





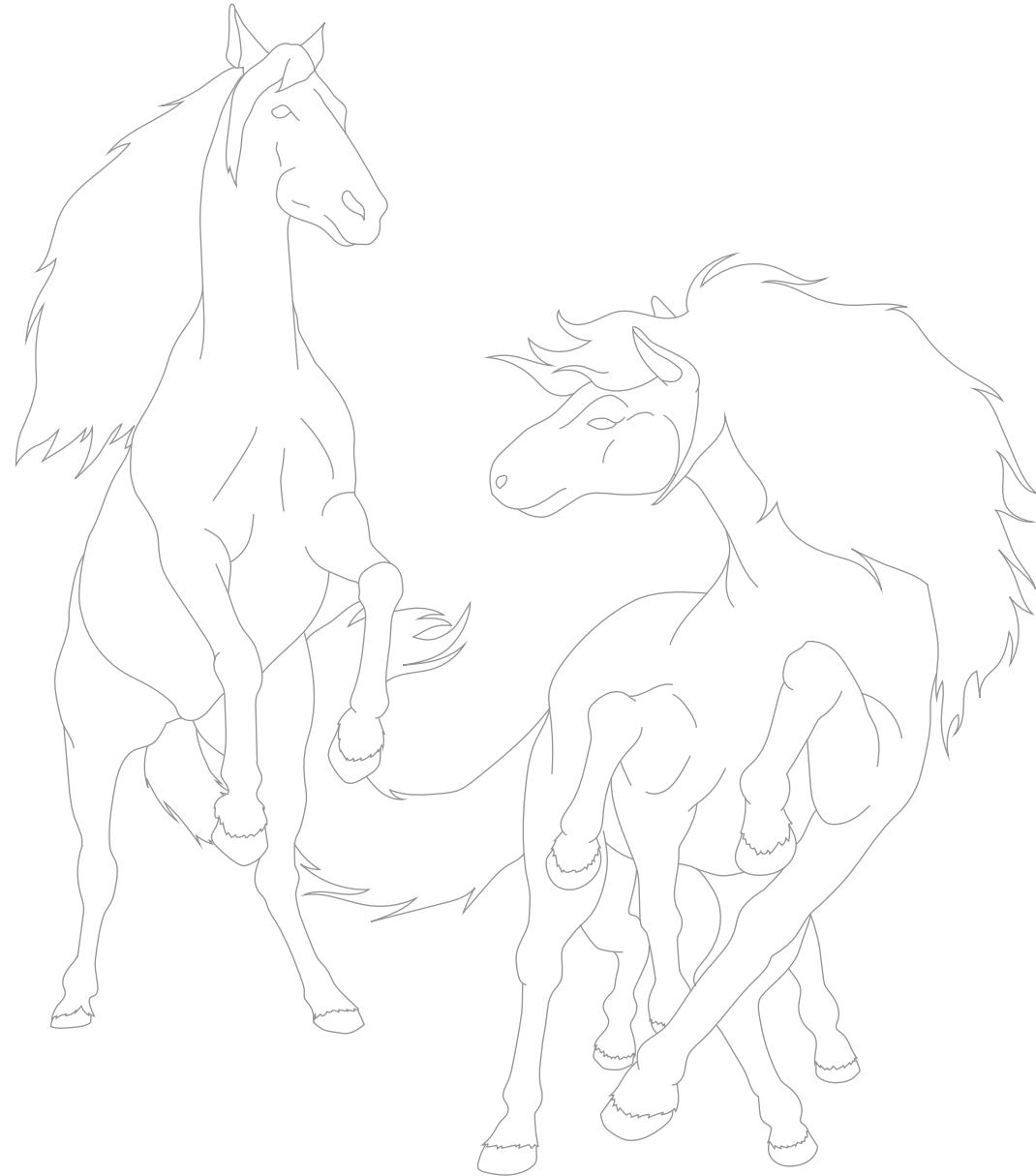
When the arranged time had arrived, Hrungrir walked to the field near Jotunheim where the duel was to be held. He wore stone armor, brandished a stone shield, and menacingly waved a whetstone, his chosen weapon, in the air above him.

Suddenly, he saw lightning and heard thunder clap above him, and Thor roared onto the battlefield. Thor hurled his hammer at the giant, and the giant slung his whetstone at the god. The stone burst against Thor's forehead and shattered into pieces, and this is the origin of all flint on earth. Thor's hammer also struck Hrungrir's head, but this time it was the giant's head that was shattered.

But a piece of Hrungrir's whetstone was lodged in Thor's forehead. So Thor sought out the sorceress Groa ("Thriving"), who sang spells over the stone to remove it from the god's brow. When Thor felt the stone moving, he told the sorceress many joyous things to encourage her, chiefly that he had encountered her lost husband, who would soon be home.

But Groa was so overcome with emotion upon hearing this that she forgot her chants, and the rock remained lodged in Thor's face until his death at Ragnarok.

SLEIPNIR AND GULLFAXI



THOR'S DUEL WITH HRUNGNIR



THE LAY OF HARBARD

As Thor crossed over a plain he came to a river and spotted a figure and his boat on the opposite bank. He woke the man, asking if he was the ferryman and that he would pay in food if he would ferry him across. The man regarded Thor as bragging and told the Thunderer that his mother was dead and that he probably had no place of his own.

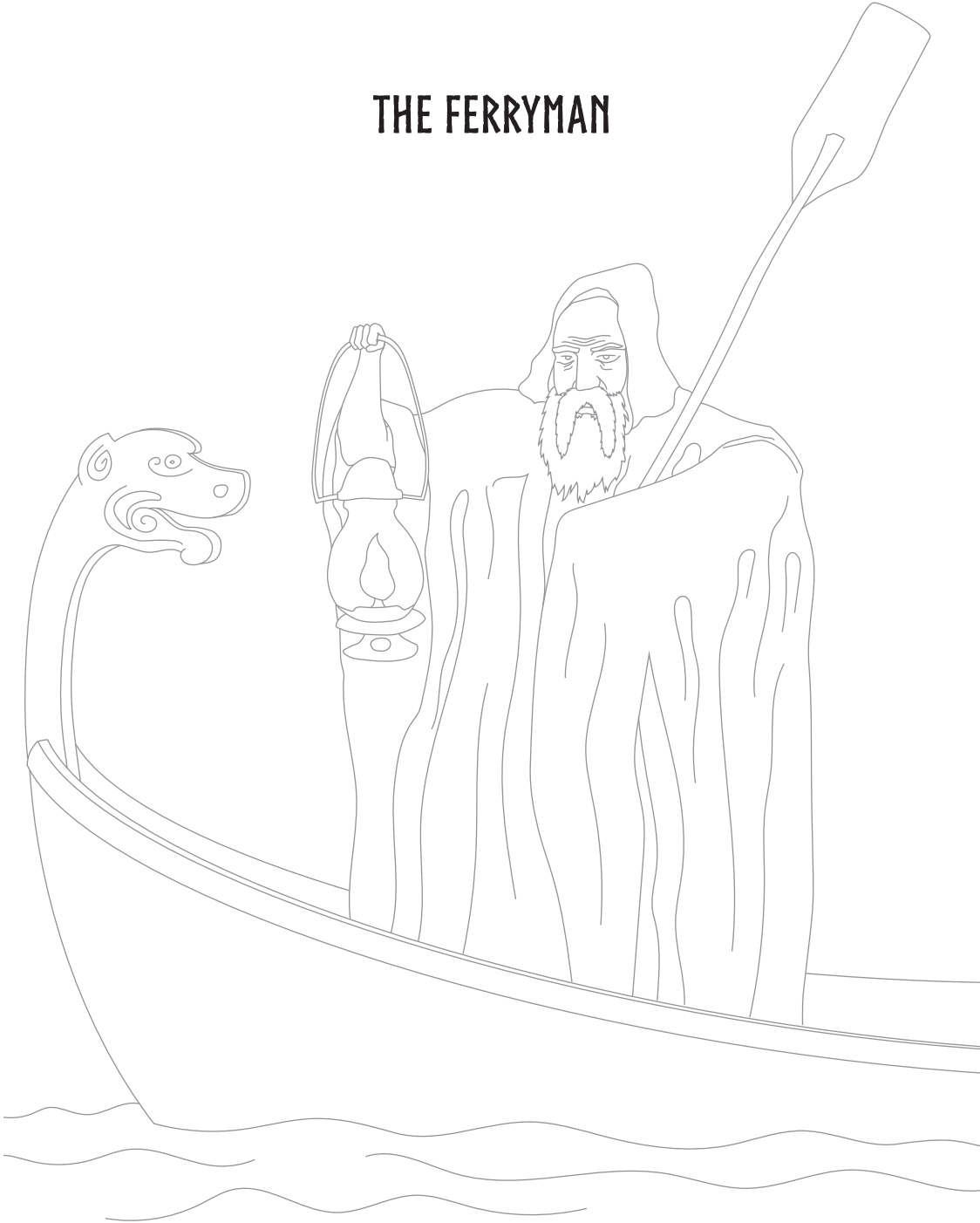
Thor commanded the ferryman to bring over his boat and tell him whose boat that was. The ferryman told him that HildaIf gave it to him to ferry while he was in the Isle of Council and has given him orders to only ferry across worthy and known men. Thor told him his name and inquired onto his, which was Harbard.

The Thunderer asked if he was dealing with a criminal but the ferryman threw the same question at Thor and then bragged of his feats, including bedding seven sisters. They went back and forth then, Thor bragging of the giants he killed and Harbard with whom he had laid. Time and again Harbard insulted Thor and even was so bold as to tell him that Sif was cheating on him.

He angered the Thunderer until he was ready to snatch up Mjollnir. Thor asked once more to ferry him across, but Harbard refused and told him how to get around instead, so Thor set off towards Midgard, the ferryman jeering at him as he left.



THE FERRYMAN



THOR AND GEIRROD

One day, just for a lark, Loki decides to disguise himself as a bird using Freyja's magical feather dress. He decides to check out the goings-on in the hall of a giant named Geirrod.

When Geirrod notices the strange bird perched in his rafters, he orders his men to catch it. Loki's perched pretty high up there, so the first man who attempts the climb huffs and puffs and can't quite reach him.


Because he's enjoying watching this man's struggle, Loki decides not to fly away until he's seen the second man attempt to scale the wall, too. The second man turns out to be a much better climber than the first. He gets within arm's reach of Loki. When Loki tries to take flight, he discovers his feet are stuck to the rafters due to magic. Freyja's magical feather-dress is apparently not that great a disguise, because the minute Geirrod gets a close look at the "bird," he's pretty sure it's really a person in disguise.

Loki's keeping mum, though, so Geirrod locks him in a box without food and water to try and loosen his tongue. It works. After three months in the box without food and water, Loki's eager to talk. He wants to be released. Geirrod wants Thor in his hall, sans hammer and protective belt. Loki promises to produce him, in exchange for his freedom.

Back in Asgard, Loki impresses Thor with his description of Geirrod's wonderful kingdom and hall. From Loki's description, Geirrod's place seems to Thor like the ultimate vacation destination and party hot-spot, and he quickly agrees with Loki that they should make a visit there.

Loki casually suggests that Thor leave behind his hammer and belt, because no peaceful guest arrives fully armed. Thor agrees. On the first night of their journey, Loki and Thor spend the night in the home of the giantess Grid. Grid warns Thor that Geirrod is a tricky son-of-a-gun. She loans him her iron glove, protective belt, and staff, just in case.





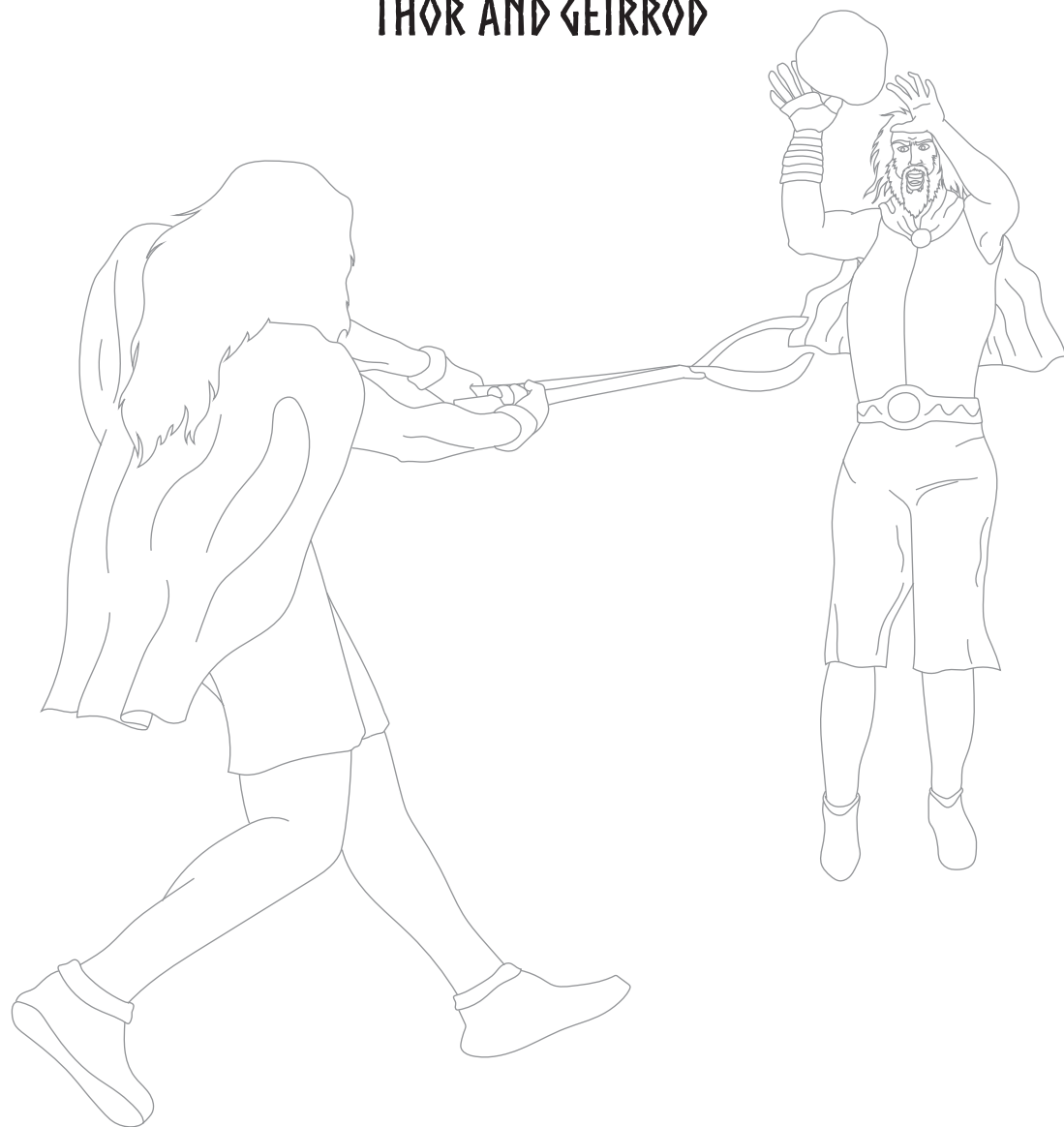
The next day, Thor and Loki have to ford the river Vímur. Thor braces himself with Grid's staff. Loki holds onto Grid's belt, now tied around Thor's waist. Upstream from them, one of Geirrod's daughters, Gjálp, straddles the river and begins to urinate. She urinates so much that her stream creates massive waves, drowning Thor and Loki! When Thor realizes that Gjálp is the cause of the trouble, he tells Loki that "you've got to stem a river at its source." He throws a rock at Gjálp. Then he grabs the branch of a rowan tree and pulls himself and Loki out of the river.

Thor and Loki finally arrive at the home of Geirrod, who promptly leads them to the goat barn. Thor takes the only seat in the place. Much to his surprise, the seat starts to float, rising toward the ceiling. The ceiling is getting way too close for comfort to Thor's head, so he pushes against it with Grid's staff and sends the chair flying back down to the ground. He hears screams. Turns out Geirrod's daughters were underneath the chair, lifting it on their backs. They've been crushed to a bloody pulp.

This family is not a close one, because Geirrod doesn't seem at all concerned that his daughters have just died a gruesome death. In fact, he invites Thor to play games.

Geirrod leads Thor to a hall with fires down its whole length. The game is pretty simple: Geirrod uses tongs to throw a molten iron at Thor. What Geirrod doesn't know is that Thor's got Grid's iron glove. He catches the molten iron, no problem. And then he throws it back at Geirrod—right through his stomach, killing him.

THOR AND GEIRROD



THE OTTER'S RANSOM

Many seasons ago Odin, Loki, and Hoenir were traveling to learn more about the world. They came to a river and walked along its shore until they came to a waterfall. There they saw an Otter who had caught a salmon and was eating it.

Loki picked up a stone, threw it at the otter and hit its head. The otter fell on the ground and was knocked out. Loki smiled as he said, I have caught an otter and a salmon with one stone. They picked up the otter and the salmon and continued the journey until they came to a house and went inside.

Here they met the farmer named Hreidmar who was a powerful man because he was very skilled in the arts of magic. The Aesir asked if they could stay for the night and offered him to share their food and showed him the otter and the salmon. When Hreidmar saw the dead otter he immediately called after his two sons, Fafnir and Regin.

“Look at the dead otter my sons, those travelers have killed your brother Otter.”

Fafnir and Regin grabbed the Aesir and bound them to a chair.

“You will pay for this, this otter was our brother.”

The Aesir replied: “We will give you as much wealth in compensation as you demand from us if you let us go.”

Hreidmar stood up and walked over the otter, he ripped off the fur and shaped it like a bag.

“You will fill the inside and cover the outside of this bag with red gold.”

Odin then said to Loki: “You need to travel to Svartalheim and find the red gold so we can pay our debt.”



When Loki came to Svartalheim, he saw the dwarf Andvari who at the sight of Loki quickly turned himself into a fish and jumped into the river Andvarafos. Loki pursued him and after a while, he finally caught the fish.

“Listen Andvari, you will give me all your gold or I will break your spine.”

Andvari’s life was literally in the hands of Loki, and he agreed to his demands. They went to his house inside the mountains and here Andvari showed Loki a room full of gold, it was an enormous treasure. The dwarf tried to hide a little gold ring inside his hand, but Loki saw this and said: “Don’t hide any of your gold from me, I want it all.”

Andvari begged Loki not to take his golden ring, as it was precious to him. If he could keep the ring, he could make more gold for himself again. Loki replied: “No, you will not keep one single coin.”

Loki picked up all the gold in the room and walked out the door, heading for the exit of the mountain. Andvari yelled after Loki that the ring will be the death of him, as the ring will destroy anyone who possesses it. Loki yelled back that he would be fine.

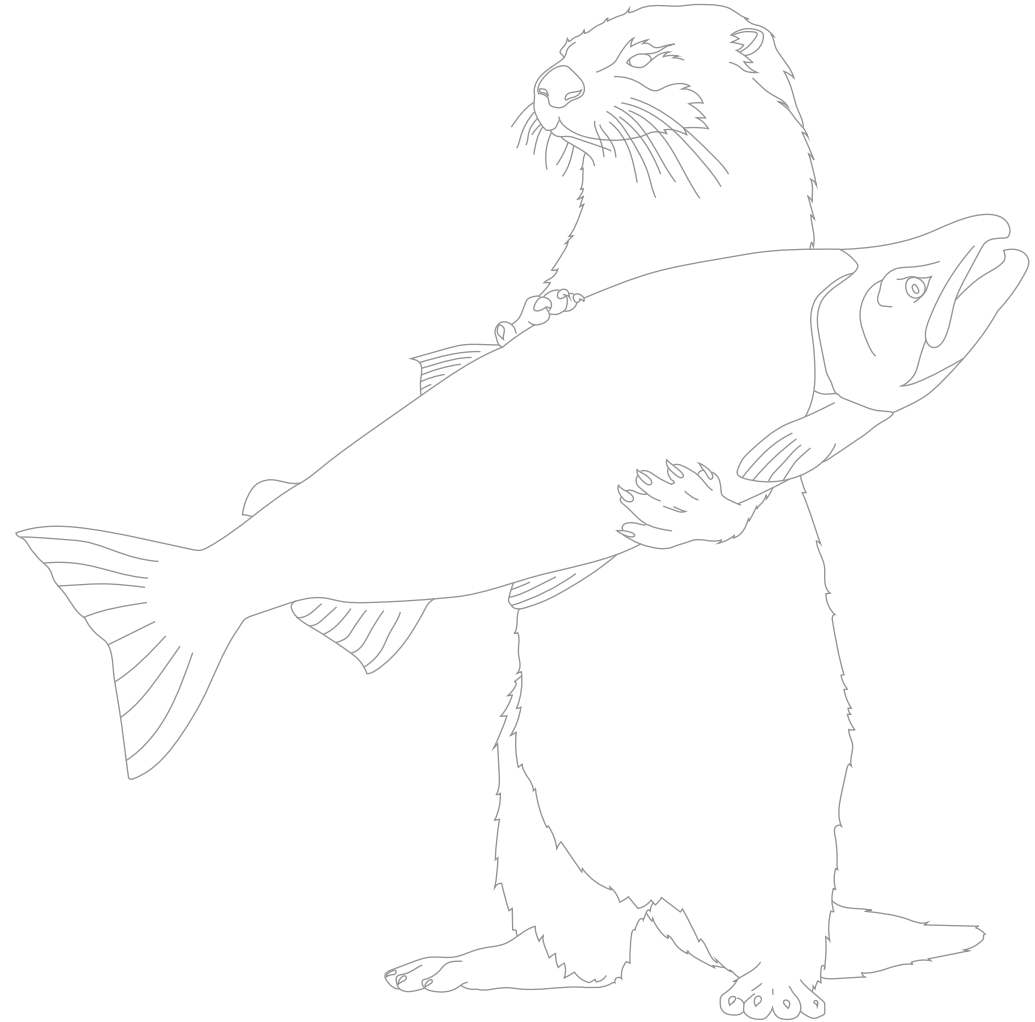
Loki arrived back at the farmhouse and showed Odin the gold. Odin quickly noticed the ring and found it beautiful so he took it for himself and gave the rest of the gold to Hreidmar. Hreidmar started to stuff the otter skin with as much gold as he could and set it upright when it was full.

Odin then came and helped him cover the skin with the gold and when he was done, he said: “Our debt to you has been paid.”

Hreidmar looked carefully, but he noticed that one whisker stuck out, demanded of them to cover it or their agreement would be broken. Odin took out the golden ring and covered the whisker and said: “We have upheld our agreement and are now free from the otter’s ransom.”

While the Aesir were traveling back to Asgard, Loki kept thinking about Andvari’s words saying that “the gold and the ring will be the death of anyone who possessed it”. So this is the reason why gold is sometimes referred to as an otter’s ransom.

THE OTTER AND THE SALMON



THE DEATH OF BALDER

All of Heaven and Earth adored Balder, he was said to be the “most beautiful of all the Gods.”

All of a sudden, Balder began to have dark dreams about something bad happening to himself, he went to the Gods in the council and told them about these dreams. The Gods began to worry that Balder was in danger and that something might happen to him.

Odin, Balder’s father and Frigg, his mother, also began to worry and they tried to come up with ideas to try and protect Balder from any danger. Frigg said that she would go into all nine worlds and have all of nature promise never to hurt Balder. Wood, stones, iron, metal, earth, snakes, disease, beasts and birds all promised to never harm Balder.

The only thing that did not promise not to harm Balder was the mistletoe because Frigg did not think that she would need to ask it because it was too young and weak to ever harm her son. All of the Gods tested everything out by throwing their weapons, sticks and stones at Balder, time after time each item being thrown would drop to the ground.

The trickster, Loki, became jealous that Balder was getting so much attention from all of the Gods. He dressed up as a servant girl and went into Frigg’s Palace to get more information about everything that promised not to harm Balder. Frigg mistook Loki as a servant girl and told him that the mistletoe was the only thing that did not promise to never hurt Balder.

Loki took this opportunity and went to find the little mistletoe plant, he then crept up behind the crowd that was still throwing things at Balder and found Balder’s blind twin, Hod. He asked Hod why he was not throwing anything at Balder and that he needs to show respect to Balder like everyone else.



He then placed the mistletoe in Hod's hand and helped him aim it towards Balder. Hod threw the mistletoe and hit Balder straight in the heart, just like that, Balder fell to the ground dead.

Everyone was so upset, they decided that Balder should have a proper funeral. The Gods had his funeral on Ringhorn. When Balder's wife, Nanna showed up, she died of a broken heart and was laid with Balder to be pushed into the sea on the ship.

When they tried to push the ship into the water it would not move, so they called Hyrrokin, a giantess to push it into the sea. Frigg could not deal with the death of her son, she sent the God Hermod to the land of the dead to find Balder and bring him back.

Hermod went through the land of the dead for nine days and nine nights and finally found Balder. He asked Hel if he could bring Balder back because so many people were missing him so much. Hel said that Balder would be able to go back home if everything on earth missed and grieved for Balder.

Hermod went back home and asked everyone to pray for Balder to come home again. Loki dressed up as a giantess and named herself Thokk, when Hermod asked him to grieve from Balder he said "I loved him not. Let Hel keep him for as long as he likes."

With that, Balder was not allowed to return to the land of the living.

THE DEATH OF BALDER



THE BINDING OF LOKI


Loki had always been more of a burden than a help to the other gods and goddesses. But after his contriving the death of Balder and ensuring that that fair god would remain in the underworld until the cosmos is destroyed during Ragnarok, he went about slandering the gods at every opportunity. At last, the gods decided that his abuse had become too much, and they went to capture him.

Loki ran far away from Asgard. At the peak of a high mountain, he built for himself a house with four doors so that he could watch for his pursuers from all directions. By day he turned himself into a salmon and hid beneath a nearby waterfall. By night he sat by his fire and weaved a net for fishing for his food.

The far-seeing Odin perceived where Loki now dwelt, and the gods went after him. When Loki saw his former friends approaching, he threw the net in the fire and hid himself in the stream in his salmon form so as to leave no traces of himself or his activities.

When the gods arrived and saw the net smoldering in the fire, they surmised that the wily shapeshifter had changed himself into the likeness of those he intended to catch for himself. The gods took up the twine Loki had been using and crafted their own net, then made their way to the stream. Several times they cast their net into the stream, and each time the salmon barely eluded them.





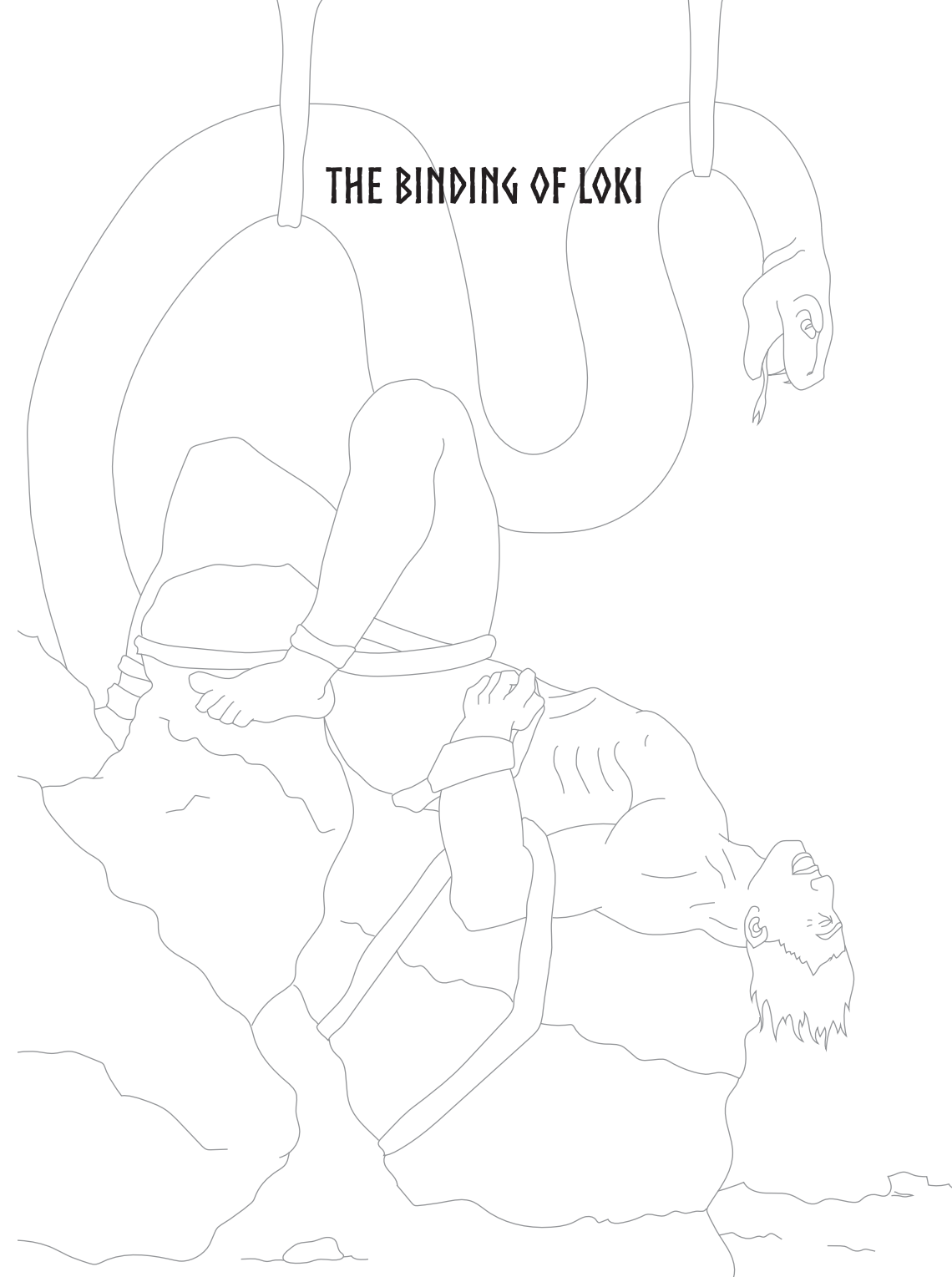
At last, the fish made a bold leap downstream to swim to the sea, and while in the air he was caught by Thor. The salmon writhed in the war-god's grasp, but Thor held him fast by his tail fins. This is why, to this day, the salmon has a slender tail.

Loki was then taken, in his regular form, to a cave. The gods then brought in Loki's two sons and turned one into a wolf, who promptly killed his brother, strewing his entrails across the cave floor.

Loki was then fastened to three rocks in the cave with the entrails of his slain son, which the gods had turned into iron chains. Skadi placed a poisonous snake on a rock above his head, where it dripped venom onto his face.

But Loki's faithful wife, Sigyn, sat by his side with a bowl that she held up to the snake's mouth to catch the poison. But every so often, the bowl became full, and Sigyn would have to leave her husband's side to dispose of its contents, at which point the drops that fell onto the unrepentant god's face would cause him to shake violently, which brought about earthquakes in Midgard, the world of humanity.

And this was the lot of Loki and Sigyn until, as fated, Loki will break free from his chains at Ragnarok to assist the giants in destroying the cosmos.



RAGNAROK

Ragnarok is the cataclysmic destruction of the cosmos and everything in it – even the gods. When Norse mythology is considered as a chronological set of tales, the story of Ragnarok naturally comes at the very end.

It is said that the biting winds will blow snows from all directions, and the warmth of the Sun will fail, plunging the earth into unprecedented cold. This winter shall last for the length of three normal winters, with no summers in between. Mankind will become so desperate for food and other necessities of life that all laws and morals will fall away, leaving only the bare struggle for survival. It will be an age of swords and axes; brother will slay brother, father will slay son, and son will slay father.

The wolves Skoll and Hati, who have hunted the sun and the moon through the skies since the beginning of time, will at last catch their prey. The stars, too, will disappear, leaving nothing but a black void in the heavens. Yggdrasil, the great tree that holds the cosmos together, will tremble, and all the trees and even the mountains will fall to the ground.

The chain that has been holding back the monstrous wolf Fenrir will snap, and the beast will run free. Jormungandr, the mighty serpent who dwells at the bottom of the ocean and encircles the land, will rise from the depths, spilling the seas over all the earth as he makes landfall. These convulsions will shake the ship Naglfar (“Nail Ship”) free from its moorings.

This ship, which is made from the fingernails and toenails of dead men and women, will sail easily over the flooded earth. Its crew will be an army of giants, the forces of chaos and destruction. And its captain will be none other than Loki, the traitor to the gods, who will have broken free of the chains in which the gods have bound him.





Fenrir, with fire blazing from his eyes and nostrils, will run across the earth, with his lower jaw on the ground and his upper jaw against the top of the sky, devouring everything in his path. Jormungandr will spit his venom over all the world, poisoning land, water, and air alike.

The dome of the sky will be split, and from the crack shall emerge the fire-giants from Muspelheim. Their leader shall be Surt, with a flaming sword brighter than the sun in his hand. As they march across Bifrost, the rainbow bridge to Asgard, the home of the gods, will break and fall behind them.

An ominous horn blast will ring out; this will be Heimdall, the divine sentry, blowing the Gjallarhorn to announce the arrival of the moment the gods have feared. Odin will anxiously consult the head of Mimir, the wisest of all beings, for counsel. The gods will decide to go to battle, even though they know what the prophecies have foretold concerning the outcome of this clash. They will arm themselves and meet their enemies on a battlefield called Vigrid (Old Norse Vígrídr, “Plain Where Battle Surges”).

Odin will fight Fenrir, and by his side will be the Einherjar, the host of his chosen human warriors whom he has kept in Valhalla for just this moment. Odin and the champions of men will fight more valiantly than anyone has ever fought before. But it will not be enough. Fenrir will swallow Odin and his men.

Then one of Odin’s sons, Vidar, burning with rage, will charge the beast to avenge his father. On one of his feet will be the shoe that has been crafted for this very purpose; it has been made from all the scraps of leather that human shoemakers have ever discarded, and with it Vidar will hold open the monster’s mouth. Then he will stab his sword through the wolf’s throat, killing him.

Another wolf, Garm, and the god Tyr will slay each other. Heimdall and Loki will do the same, putting a final end to the trickster’s treachery, but costing the gods one of their best in the process. The god Freyr and the giant Surt will also be the end of each other. Thor and Jormungandr, those age-old foes, will both finally have their chance to kill the other. Thor will succeed in felling the great snake with the blows of his hammer. But the serpent will have covered him in so much venom that he will not be able to stand for much longer; he will take nine paces before falling dead himself and adding his blood to the already-saturated soil of Vigrid.

RAGNAROK



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