

# EINAR'S RAGNAROK

Written by  
Nora Louise Syran  
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noralouisesyran@gmail.com

## ORIGINAL ENSEMBLE CASTING for 18 players: 5 males and 13 females

- Player 1: Einar Gudbrandsson
- Player 2: Thor
- Player 3: Harald Haakonsson (Erik's Father), Odin
- Player 4: Odin Berserker, Heimdallr, Baldr\*, Njord
- Player 5: The Lawspeaker, Thrym, Sindri, Tyr, Hodr\*
- Player 6: Loki+
- Player 7: Erik Haraldsson, Thrym, Brokkr, Fenrir\*\*+,  
Builder/Giant
- Player 8: Devout Thor Follower+, Idunn, Skuld (Norn/Fate)
- Player 9: Freyja
- Player 10: Tora Svendsdottir (Mother), Ran
- Player 11: Fence-sitter+, Sigyn
- Player 12: Christian 1+, Hlin, Urd (Norn/Fate)
- Player 13: Christian 2+, Fulla, Verdandi (Norn/Fate)
- Player 14: Astrid Gudbrandsdottir
- Player 15: Ragnhild Gudbrandsdottir
- Player 16: Sister Gudrid, Sif
- Player 17: Fierce Thor follower+, Saga
- Player 18: Sarcastic Odin Follower+, Snotra, Skadi, The  
Volva (Wisewoman)

\*non speaking male or female+

## ICELANDERS 1000AD

Tora Svendsdottir (Mother to Einar, Ragnhild and Astrid)

Devout Thor Follower

Fierce Female Thor Follower

Harald Haakonsson (Father to Erik)

Odin Beserker

Sarcastic Odin Follower

Erik Haraldsson

Fence-Sitter

Christian 1

Christian 2

Astrid Gudbrandsdottir

Sister Gudrid, the Far Traveler

Law-Speaker

Einar Gudbrandsson (the poet)

Ragnhild Gudbrandsdottir

The Volva (Wisewoman)

## MYTHOLOGICAL FIGURES

Three Norns--The "Fates"

Urd-- "What Once Was"

Verdandi-- "What Is Coming into Being"

Skuld-- "What Shall Be"

Heimdallr --Guardian of the Rainbow bridge

Odin-- The All-Father

Rán-- Goddess of the Ocean

Saga-- Goddess of Poetry

Freyja-- Odin's Wife

Fulla-- Freyja's handmaiden, carries her secrets & shoes!

Hlin--Freyja's handmaiden, carries a bow and arrows

Snotra--Goddess of Justice

Tyr--God of War

Thor--God of Thunder, The Giant Killer

Loki--The Trickster half-God, half-Giant

Idunn--Goddess of the Apples of Youth

The Builder--A Giant in Disguise

Skadi--Giantess of the Hunt

Njord--God of the Wind and of the Sea

Baldr--Odin's son

Hodr--Odin's blind son

Sif--Thor's wife

Dwarves--Brokkr & Sindri

Sigyn--Loki's wife

Astrid's song can be heard online:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWgseE-HwPY>

Einar's Ragnarok 'Trailer':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sUfOphApD88&t=0s>

## PROLOGUE

*Three Norns water the World Tree, Yggdrasil, formed by the ensemble.*

*Sigyn and Loki sit at the base of the tree. Sigyn holds a bowl to catch the dripping venom from a snake above his head. Sigyn slowly turns away with the bowl and the earth rumbles into the following scene.*

*The ensemble breaks into rival factions struggling to stand as the ground moves beneath them. Einar and Ragnhild observe from a distance.*

## SCENE ONE - THE ALTHING

*Midsummer's Eve. The Althing, Iceland. 1000 AD.*

TORA SVENDSDOTTIR

Oh no! Loki struggles and the earth moves!

ODIN BERSERKER

Great Odin, hold tight the bonds of Loki...

CHRISTIAN 1

Pagans! I knew this could never work...

SISTER GUDRID

Give it time, give it time...

DEVOUT THOR FOLLOWER

Loki struggles beneath the earth! If we vote for the Christian god then surely the end of the world will come!

FIERCE THOR FOLLOWER

If Ragnarok is to come, then let the end of the world come! Thor is not hiding away from it in fear! He has his hammer (Mjolnir) ready!

(Erik and Astrid are shyly aware of each other. Stealing glances)

ERIK HARALDSSON

Odin isn't hiding away either! We'll all face our fate head on!

ODIN BERSERKER

Fight fate!!

DEVOUT THOR FOLLOWER

Fight fate? That's ridiculous...

THE ENSEMBLE

You're a coward...fate is fate...bring it on! How dare you... etc. Stop this fighting! Can't we just get along?

CHRISTIAN 2

What's happening?

SISTER GUDRID

They think voting for Christ will bring on the end of the world. They believe Loki is breaking free from his bonds deep underground.

ASTRID

That's ridiculous. They're just old stories about the old gods my mother likes to tell...

SISTER GUDRID

Yes, well, next they'll be saying the world is heating up, the oceans are rising and the Midgard serpent will swallow us all whole!

(The bickering carries on more calmly now the rumbling has ended and the earth is still.)

ODIN BERSERKER

Vote Christian and lose our slaves? No thanks! I'll take Odin-- or Thor --any day over the Christian God!

FENCE-SITTER

I suppose it isn't very Christian: fighting, killing, owning slaves...

FIERCE THOR FOLLOWER

We're *not* Christian!!!

CHRISTIAN 1

Not yet! Don't you all see?! You heathens are making Iceland a laughing stock!

CHRISTIAN 2

We're seen as utterly backward. A thousand years behind the rest of Europe!

ASTRID

We'd be better off part of Christian Europe...

FENCE-SITTER

Can't we all just get along and have fun tonight like we always do on Midsummer's Eve?

FIERCE THOR FOLLOWER

(to Fence-sitter)

Our men are being held hostage in Norway and all you can think about is a party!? Are you with us or against us?

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

Yeah! Make up your mind! You carry Odin in one pocket and Thor in the other!

DEVOUT THOR FOLLOWER

But s/he's right! If we could stop fighting amongst ourselves, we might have a chance to resist this new religion!

TORA SVENDSDOTTIR

For peace in Iceland, when on land, sure, I will worship Christ...but at sea, I will always put my faith in Thor!

(Applause from Thor followers.)

HARALD HAAKONSSON

(hushing the crowd)

I know you seek peace. A compromise, Tora. But you must not let your worry for your husband --and the other men and boys held hostage in Norway by King Olaf (the crowd mumbles their disapproval) Quiet! You must not let your worry for his safety muddle your thinking. (Clearly to all) Their very lives depend upon us voting for the Christian god. And the Christian god only!

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

Well, I still say we put our faith in Odin *only*!

(Applause from Odin followers.)

CHRISTIAN 1

Save your men! Turn away from your barbarism, your viking raids...

ODIN BERSERKER

Barbarism? Viking raids? We're farmers and traders now!

FENCE-SITTER

I've never been a-viking all my life...

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

That's because no one ever invited you along "home-bound"!

FENCE-SITTER

Did you just call me "home-bound"? Why I ought to--

ERIK HARALDSSON

When was the last time *any* of us went a-viking?

ODIN BERSERKER

Oh Odin, do I miss those days! Man, were they fun!

FIERCE THOR FOLLOWER

You had so much fun "going berserk" you lost all your teeth biting down too hard on your shield!

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

And now you'll eat nothing but porridge! (laughing)

ODIN BERSERKER

Where's the honor of living to old age? Suits me just fine to battle it out with King Olaf and meet the Raven God...join my friends feasting and drinking in Valhalla! Who's with me!!?

CHRISTIAN 2

It's been twenty-four hours! How long will it take the Law-Speaker to make up his mind!?

HARALD HAAKONSSON

Peace, everyone! The Law-Speaker will be here any moment!

CHRISTIAN 1

And will declare Iceland Christian!

DEVOUT THOR FOLLOWER

What say you Gudrid the Far Traveler?

CHRISTIAN 2

*Sister Gudrid now!*

SISTER GUDRID

(pause) I say (pause) God loves you one and all! Pull down your temples and throw away your idols...

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

Oh, they've gotten to her already! She's even planning a voyage to Rome to meet the Pope!

SISTER GUDRID

If you don't convert willingly, King Olaf will send his forces from Norway -- sword in hand -- to force you all to convert! (pause) The Law-speaker is wise. He'll have thought of a compromise.

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

*Everyone loses in a compromise!*

ASTRID

Harald Haakonsson is right. We must do what we can to bring our men home. Even if it means voting for the Christian god!

HARALD HAAKONSSON

He's here. Let's hear what he has to say.

(The Law-Speaker enters.)

LAW-SPEAKER

Give me some mead. I'm parched. I've been under my cloak meditating on the matter all night...

CHRISTIAN 1

Pagan rituals! Under a cloak communing with evil spirits...

CHRISTIAN 2

Utterly backward, I tell you!

ERIK HARALDSSON

He was seeking wisdom...inspiration...

(Astrid smiles at Erik as he's attempting to keep the peace.)

LAW-SPEAKER

We should have one law and one faith.

(The crowd reacts accordingly: Agreed!  
Yeah! Thor! Odin!)

LAW-SPEAKER

Before I announce my compromise,

(Echos of previous complaints)

LAW-SPEAKER

Quiet! Quiet! I want you all to make a pledge. We should have one law and one faith, because if we shatter the law, we shatter the peace. Well? Do you pledge an unbreakable oath?

ODIN BERSERKER

Swear an oath? On Odin's spear?

LAW-SPEAKER

Yes, an *unbreakable* oath...

SARCASTIC ODIN FOLLOWER

Until we're forced to break our idols and dump them in the waterfall!

(Echoes of "I swear"..."yes")

LAW-SPEAKER

I've decided that it is in the best interests of all of Iceland to turn away from our old gods--

ENSEMBLE

Ah! I knew it! No!? Hallelujah! Oh Thor! Odin! Praise be! Oh, thank the gods the men will return home soon! We'll need to be baptized. But it's freezing in the river! I wouldn't mind the hot springs. King Olaf's forced us into this! Corruption!! Corruption, I tell you. The system's broken!



LAW-SPEAKER

Quiet! We have no choice! We must bring our men home!

ENSEMBLE

Will we still be allowed to eat horse meat!? We'll still be able to make sacrifices in private?

(The Volcano erupts.)

FIERCE THOR FOLLOWER

Well, there you are, the very top of the mountain has blown itself off!

DEVOUT THOR FOLLOWER

We've upset the gods! Blasphemed and now they're angry!

ERIK HARALDSSON

Astrid! Astrid! Quickly! This way!

(The rumbling subsides)

SCENE TWO - THE BEGINNING

EINAR

It's not always like this here at the Althing. The fighting. The Althing is the place where we come to work through our differences. To stop the fighting. (pause) But Iceland is changing. (Resignedly) And we have to change with it. (pause) I miss my father. (pause) He hopes I will be a Law-Speaker someday. That's all I've ever wanted to be: a poet. To immerse myself in the magical power of words.

(Ensemble hold large books held open reverently in their hands.)

ENSEMBLE

"In the beginning was the word."

EINAR

The monks love words too. Sister Gudrid tells me the monks lock their books up in monasteries, they are so precious. Sister Gudrid, Gudrid the Far Traveler, told me the beginning of the Christian world is much like our own.

ENSEMBLE

"In the beginning there was a darkness upon the face of the deep"...

EINAR

An ocean. (pause) For us, norsemen, too, the universe is an enormous ocean which began with a big wave. And inside the big wave, a big sound was building.

(The ensemble closes their books simultaneously. Heimdallr enters and holds his Gjallar horn to his lips ready to blow. The ensemble forms Yggdrassil.)

HEIMDALLR

Has Loki broken free from his bonds? Do the giants descend upon Asgard? I've not heard a thing?!

EINAR

No, no Heimdallr! Careful! Not the Gjallar horn yet!

(Heimdallr retreats, puzzled.)

EINAR

We may need it later to drink from the Well of Memory at the foot of the World Tree, Yggdrassil. (pause) But I'm getting ahead of myself. It's difficult. The stories have no clear start or finish and finding the right thread must be nearly as difficult a task as the Norns have in weaving together the threads of each of our lives. Our stories. (pause) But if I'm to be a poet, I'll need to try.

(The Norns enter and sit weaving at the base of where the tree will form. Waiting.)

EINAR

(pause, reflecting) Weaving together stories, our stories. (pause) I'll start again.

(Heimdallr re-enters, on guard.)

EINAR

Heimdallr guards the Rainbow Bridge between Asgard, the home of the gods, and Midgard, where men live--

HEIMDALLR

Shh! I can hear the wool growing on the sheep and grass growing on the earth. The Gjallar horn will be sounded at the end of days. The end of days which also mark a beginning.

(Heimdallr exits.)

EINAR

In the beginning there was Ymir, The Scream.

(As the Norns speak their first line. A sound grows.)

NORNS

From a wave of sound deep in the dark emptiness of Ginnungagap a new universe came into being. (pause)

I was there. I saw it. NORN 1 (URD "WHAT ONCE WAS")

I see it and-- NORN 2 (VERDANDI "WHAT IS COMING INTO BEING")

I will see it all. NORN 3 (SKULD "WHAT SHALL BE")

(The tree and norns exit as...)

SCENE THREE - READING RUNES

*Ragnhild, Einar's sister, comes looking for him. He is lost in thought. Einar hides his wax tablet and stylus from her view.*

RAGNHILD  
Einar? Where are you? Lost in your thoughts again? Einar? What are you doing?

EINAR  
Nothing.

RAGNHILD  
Einar? Are you on your tablet again? (pause) Haven't you mastered the letters yet? Sister Gudrid taught them to you ages ago!

EINAR  
I can't read as quickly as you and Astrid. (pause) And I can't write. Sister Gudrid says it happens. Sometimes. Especially with boys. But I'm not a half-wit or anything, I just can't make sense of the letters let alone write anything with them.

RAGNHILD  
All letters?

EINAR  
The Latin ones Sister Gudrid is trying to teach me. I wish to be a Law-Speaker someday as well as a skald. I know all the laws.

RAGNHILD  
All of them? Even this very newest one?

EINAR  
(reciting)  
"We should have one law and one faith, because if we shatter the law, we shatter the peace." But Sister Gudrid says it's not good enough anymore just to memorize the  
(MORE)

EINAR (cont'd)

old tales, poems, laws and such. I have to be able to write them.

RAGNHILD

No one knows the old poetry like you do, not even Father tells the stories as well. (She sighs, missing him) You keep winters, and our wait for him, from being awfully long. Your kennings are intricate and playful and beautiful...you are a skald. Einar you are a poet.

EINAR

Sister Gudrid says if I'm to be a poet now, in this new age, and keep our history and old stories alive, I have to learn to read and write with ink as she does and as the monks do. Ragnhild, look at my hands!

RAGNHILD

Oh Einar! They're covered in ink!

EINAR

Sister Gudrid says there's no shame in *practicing* on a wax one. She says the Christian King Charlemagne kept a wax tablet under his pillow at night and would practice writing whenever he could so--

(TORA calls from within.)

ASTRID

Einar!? Have you brought in the wood yet? (irritated) And who is going to milk the cows now!? The slaves have all run off!?

EINAR

Don't tell mother I keep the wax tablet under my pillow! (sighs) It's not my fault I prefer Odin and his poetry over her beloved Thor and his hammer. Father wouldn't think I'm wasting my time trying to learn to write!

RAGNHILD

What about runes...?

EINAR

Ragnhild, I have to learn to read and write as the learned Brothers do (pause) in Latin!

RAGNHILD

I found something buried in the forest I want you to see.

EINAR

(unimpressed)

It's a old rune stick.

RAGNHILD

But can you read it?

EINAR

Of course, I can. Everyone can read runes.

RAGNHILD

But...?

EINAR

Easy, it's like pictures....

RAGNHILD

Not everyone can read runes, Einar. Well, not these. These are very, very old. (pause) What does it say?

EINAR

It's about Odin, the father of the gods... and the death of his son, Baldr.

RAGNHILD

Oh, poor Baldr...

EINAR

It's a riddle where the past, the present and the future all whirl together...like a maelstrom.

RAGNHILD

A what?

EINAR

A whirlpool. Disorder. The world out of balance and needing to be restored. (pause) Odin foresaw his son's death in a dream...

SCENE FOUR - BALDR'S DREAMS

*Asgard. Freyja sits comforting Baldr who sits at her feet, his face hidden from view. Odin enters, puts down his staff and cloak. The ensemble creates two ravens.*

ODIN

I worry about you, Hunin...(stroking the first bird) my thoughts. I can think of nothing else but my son Baldr. Fly, Hunin! Come back soon with news of my son. (pause) Munin, my memory, (stroking the second bird, near tears) Oh, my poor boy...he was such a lovely child! How could anything in the universe wish him harm? Oh, Memory. I cherish you most of all. Don't abandon me! But fly, ravens, fly! Bring news. I must stop my son's death from happening...!

(Odin greets his wife, Freyja.)

FREYJA

Odin, what news? You've traveled far... What have you learned? Have you traveled the nine worlds over? Why do  
(MORE)

FREYJA (cont'd)

you and Baldr have these horrible dreams? What do they portend for our son?

ODIN

Yes, I've traveled far. The nine worlds over. When I reached the cold depths of the watery underworld, I found Ran and her nine daughters of the sea readying the halls for a magnificent feast...

(Ran fixes a giant net. The nine daughters of the sea prepare an enormous banquet, they carry trays of food/cloth and tidy up/collect pieces of plastic--an anachronistic glimpse of the future and indeed, the present)

ODIN

For whom do you ready your net Ran, goddess of the sea? Which poor sailors do you plan to catch today?

RAN (GODDESS OF THE OCEAN)

Shhh! If I tell you, grey-bearded wanderer, my secret must stay down here with me! (pause) Hel (pause), in Hell, tells me a guest of honor above all guests will be joining us soon. (indicates the hall and the preparations) But I don't know whether she meant here with us beneath the sea or in Hell beneath the earth, with Hel herself. So, I'm readying my net for the catch, just in case...(laughing) You're wondering who this guest could be? Why, the most loved, the kindest of the Aesir, indeed the noblest of all the gods, is to dine with us or with Hel (wickedly delighted) Baldr!

ODIN

No!

RAN (GODDESS OF THE OCEAN)

(suspicious) Who are you, grey-bearded wanderer? (recognizing Odin) Why, All-Father! Odin! Up to your tricks again!? I'll say no more! You've seen your son's fate with your one all-seeing eye and think by coming down here you can stop it!? But you cannot stop his death. Send your ravens into the world if you must...but you know, nothing you learn, nothing can stop this!

(The scene returns to Valhalla.)

FREYJA

That's all she told you? (urgently) We must try, Odin! Send your ravens out to gather news!

ODIN

I have already sent Hunin and Munin into the world to learn all we can my dearest Freyja...

FREYJA

Fulla! Hlin! My handmaidens, do come...

(The two handmaidens arrive.  
Fulla with a small shoe-sized  
box. Hlin is ready for battle.)

FULLA

Oh, my dear Lady Freyja. Your heart is heavy. Share your burden with me who keeps your secrets safe.

HLIN

Dry your tears, my Lady. Who do you wish me to save from harm?

FREYJA

My son, Baldr is in danger! Go to every corner of the earth to beg that no harm will ever come to my precious boy! Help me, Fulla, Hlin...

FULLA

We'll ask everything in the cosmos...

HLIN

living and nonliving...

HANDMAIDENS

To swear they'll never harm your son, Baldr.

(They turn first to each other)

HANDMAIDENS

Do you swear never to harm Baldr? I swear!

(Fulla and Hlin search the stage  
for something non-living. Fulla  
spies the mistletoe.)

HANDMAIDENS

Non-living...non-living...?

FULLA

Mistletoe?

HLIN

Oh, no! What harm could *it* do?

(They then address the audience.  
"Do you swear?" Say, "I will  
never harm Baldr..." etc. Hlin  
holds her bow and arrow ready to  
be sure everyone swears. Ends in  
applause and improvised  
gratitude from the Handmaidens.  
Then, turning away from the  
audience, quietly with a sense  
of foreboding...)

FULLA

Have we asked everything living and non-living thing in all the nine worlds?

HLIN

I think so. Everything except the mistletoe.

FULLA

Oh, mistletoe. What possible harm could *it* do...

SCENE FIVE

*Einar's oldest Sister, Astrid, enters looking for her siblings.*

ASTRID

Better get a move on, Ragnhild! Mother's looking for you everywhere! She's in a terrible mood. The slaves have run off!

RAGNHILD

Einar, I've an idea. You carry on practicing your letters on your tablet. Don't worry, you'll learn them and soon be writing in ink to show Father when he returns. He'll be so proud of you. But meanwhile, practice *telling* your stories and I'll write them down for you.

ASTRID

What stories?

RAGNHILD

Einar's been telling me some of the old stories and I'm going to write them down for him.

ASTRID

*You, shield-maiden want-to-be Ragnhild Gudbrandsdotter, are going to write down stories?*

RAGNHILD

Yes and you could help! Astrid the newly converted Christian who is charitable and good!

ASTRID

Help you write down that old fashioned, out of date, so yesterday pagan mythology!? No thank you. Father did not teach us to read and write to write down nonsense. Count me out! The tales are barbaric!

EINAR

Not *all* of the tales are barbaric; some of them are funny. Like when Loki cut off Sif's hair or when Thor lost his hammer!

RAGNHILD

(excitedly) His hammer, Mjolnir! The giant killer!?



ASTRID

How do you lose a hammer?!

EINAR

One morning....

SCENE SIX - MISSING MJOLNIR

*Thor is looking for his hammer. Sounds of warriors fighting in the halls of Valhalla. Sif admires her golden hair in a mirror.*

THOR

Sif?! Where is my hammer!? Sif??!

SIF

Yes, Thor...

THOR

Have you seen my hammer?

SIF

(absent mindedly)

Which one?

THOR

My hammer, Mjolnir, Sif! The one that never misses its mark and always returns to the hand that throws it.  
(pause) The *magical* one!?

SIF

Oh, yes. The one that matches your belt so nicely?

THOR

Yes, that one.

SIF

Um, let me think. (pause) No. But I did see that scoundrel Loki lurking about...

(Loki and Sigyn enter.)

THOR

Loki? Have you seen my hammer!? (pause) Are you up to something?

LOKI

Me? Loki? No... I swear Thor, I don't know where your hammer is. Sigyn, be my darling, as always, and tell him.

(Sigyn, Loki's long suffering wife is accustomed to Loki's antics and lies for him.)

SIGYN

Uh, oh yes... Loki has been with me, his wife.

THOR

When?

SIGYN

Um...whenever the hammer went missing...of course.  
(laughs awkwardly) He is not to blame for you misplacing  
your hammer, Thor. Perhaps you shrank it and lost it  
yourself?

LOKI

Good one, my dear.

(SAGA wanders in, clearly not a  
morning person. SNOTRA is  
studying. IDUNN enters and hands  
out apples.)

SAGA

(yawning)

Freyja was out again early this morning, she may have  
seen something...

(Freyja enters in furs, removing  
riding gloves.)

SIF

Lady Freyja, have you seen Thor's hammer?

FREYJA

No, I've been out all morning.

SNOTRA

Lady Freja has been driving that cat-chariot of hers  
again! And a bit too fast inside the limits of Asgard,  
too. Really! Odin ought to have a talk with her before  
she and her cats run someone over!

FREYJA

(Ignoring Snotra)

You're welcome to use my falcon feathers to find them,  
Loki. I know how fond you are of dressing up and they  
need a good airing out.

(Freyja gives Loki a coat of  
feathers with which he searches  
the nine worlds for Mjolnir.)

LOKI

(searching )

Not in Asgard... Not in Midgard...Where in the nine  
worlds could Mjolnir be? Ah, of course, Jotunheim. Home  
sweet home for the Giants! (pause, flapping of wings) Ah,  
there you are... (realization) Oh, no...

(Loki rejoins the gods)

LOKI

I have good news... and I have bad news.

THOR

What's the good news?

LOKI

I found your hammer, Thor...

SIGYN

Bravo Loki!

LOKI

...but the Jotun Thrym, the Giant, won't return the hammer until he has Freyja in return.

SAGA

What is it with Frost Giants wanting to carry off Freyja?

ODIN

What do you suggest, Heimdallr?

HEIMDALLR

Giving a Jotun our precious Freyja would jeopardize the peace we've established between the Vanir and the gods of Asgard. I suggest Thor go to Jotunheim himself.

THOR

And bash the giant's skull in!

HEIMDALLR

Yes, but hold your goats, Thor. You must go to see Thrym dressed as Freyja.

THOR

What? Me? God of Thunder? Dress as a *woman*?

FREYJA

(Amused) It's not all bad, you should try it! Much more variety than you fellows ever have.

FULLA

Especially for shoes!

FREYJA

And jewelry!

THOR

I'll be mocked until Ragnarok!

IDUNN

But if you don't go as Heimdallr suggests, Asgard will be ruled (pause) by giants!

HLIN

Only you Thor can protect us!

THOR

(Growling) *If I get my hammer back...*

LOKI

I'll go with you, Thor! I'll dress up as your maid-servant!

THOR

Fine.

(They exit to dress Thor as Freyja)

SNOTRA

We'll need to coach him a bit on etiquette first. His table manners are atrocious!

FREYJA

I know exactly what he can wear...

(The gods exit as the Giant Thrym enters to the tune of Grieg's "Hall of the Mountain King". Loki and Thor, wearing a veil, enter. Thrym greets his guests. Thor attempts a clumsy curtsy.)

THRYM

Welcome, ladies of Asgard! The gods have finally been good to me.

(Loki, dressed as a handmaid, seats himself between the Giant Thrym and Thor, dressed Freyja.)

THRYM

Come in, come in and let's toast to our nuptials!

(A servant brings Thor a drink. Instead of taking a glass, he lifts an entire barrel to his lips and drains it. And then wipes his mouth on his sleeve.)

THOR

(Burping loudly)

Why, thank you!

(Servants bring in dish after dish to Thor who eats them all. Loki tries his best to slow the Thunder god down.)

LOKI

Easy now, my Lady!

THRYM

Does she always put so much away? She's eaten an entire cow and a school of salmon...not to mention the mead, straight from the barrel!? I've never seen a woman with such an appetite.

LOKI

Well, Freyja is no ordinary woman. She's been so excited to marry you, she hasn't eaten in days!

THRYM

And what... piercing, red eyes you have, my dear!

LOKI

They're (pause) bloodshot! She hasn't slept well in days, either.

THRYM

Well, then, let's hurry up and get on with it! Bring Mjollnir to bless this union!

(The hammer is brought in and placed in Thor's lap. Thor grabs it. Just as he is about to hit the giant over the head... freezes)

SCENE SEVEN

ASTRID

Stop, stop, stop...

RAGNHILD

Wait, wait, wait! I'm confused. I understand how Thor got his hammer *back*, but how did Thor get Mjollnir in the first place?

EINAR

That's a good story too! Hmmm...we'll have to go back.

(Everyone reverses the actions of the previous scene, moving quickly back in time.)

SCENE EIGHT

*Thor and Sif are sleeping. Thor snores loudly. Loki enters giggling, holding large shiny scissors with which he cuts off Sif's hair. Loki starts to sneak*

*off. A rooster crows. Thor wakes, sees Sif and...*

THOR

Get back, you hag!

SIF

Thor! It's *me*, your wife, Sif! (realizing) My...my.... hair... Someone's cut it all off!?

(She exits)

THOR

Loki! I'm going to break every bone in your body!

LOKI

P..p..ple...please, let me ...breathe...talk. Let me go to Svartalfheim and I'll see if I can get those nimble-fingered dwarves, those clever dwarves, to create a new head of hair for your...ahem, lovely...Sif. (calling) Freyja, I need to borrow your falcon feathers!

(Loki flies off. The gods assemble and marvel at the gifts Loki returns with. Sif enters looking radiant in new golden hair. Odin holds a small paper ship in his hand and a spear in the other.)

ODIN

This is marvelous! I've never seen a spear the like, forged from sunlight. Thank you, Loki. You've done...(surprised) well. The sons of the dwarf Ivaldi have surpassed themselves with their gifts: My spear, new golden hair for Sif and a ship that fits in my hand!

GODS

Hear, hear. Wonderful treasures! Lovely. Golden! Ship. Beautiful etc

LOKI

But there are more...

BROKKR

You bet there are more! Loki made a bet on them!

SIGYN

Loki, what have you done now?

SINDRI

Loki said we couldn't fashion finer gifts for the gods than the brothers Ivaldi could!

BROKKR

So we took his bet!

(The dwarves work at an anvil.  
Brokkr works the bellows. Sindri  
lights the fire and hammers.)

SIGYN

Loki *what* did you bet the dwarves *with*!?

LOKI

(nonchalantly)

My head.

SIGYN

Your head?!

BROKKR

For our first treasure, we created a golden boar...

SIF

Pff! A golden pig?!

FREYJA

Gullenbursti! He gives off light in the dark and can run  
faster than any horse! How marvelous! My brother Freyr  
will love it!

(The gods marvel at the boar.  
Loki, disguised as a horse-fly,  
slinks in and out between the  
dwarves.)

SINDRI

After creating the golden boar, I set *more* gold on the  
fire.

(Sound of the bellows. Brokkr swats the air.)

BROKKR

I worked the bellows. Ah! Get that fly out of here!

SIF

I didn't know Loki could transform himself into a fly!?

SIGYN

I think I see where this is going...oh Loki...

SINDRI

And I drew out a magical ring...

IDUNN

(fascinated)

Draupnir. From this ring, every ninth night, drip eight  
new identical golden rings.

(The gods pass the ring around,  
marveling at it. Brokkr slaps  
his neck and shouts in pain.)

SINDRI

Careful, now, Brokkr, we must tread carefully with this last treasure. It's tricky, very, tricky. Easy does it...

(Brokkr covers his eye in pain)

BROKKR

Ah! That pesky fly! It's stung my eyelid!

(He stops working the bellows.)

SINDRI

Ah! No, keep it steady... Oh, no Brokkr....it's ruined.

BROKKR

Oh, Sindri. It's marvelous! It's just that...

DWARVES

The handle is too short!

SINDRI

It looks like the treasures the Ivaldi brothers made will please the gods more than our gifts. We've been tricked by Loki (pause) again.

SIF

Yes, well it looks like you lost the bet, boys! The hair the Ivaldi brothers made for me is much nicer than your hammer! Just look at that ridiculous handle!

THOR

Yes, the handle is a bit short, but it's...it's the most marvelous of all the gifts! I will make great use of it against the giants, trolls and ogres who threaten the peace and order of Asgard.

ODIN

Nothing is more important than our safety. It's decided! Brokkr and Sindri, you've won the bet with Mjolnir! Thor's new hammer! Loki? Give them what you promised.

SAGA

(highly amused)

So, Loki, it looks like you owe them your head!

LOKI

(thinking quickly)

(To Odin) I said they could have my head, but nothing else. (To the dwarves) How are you going to have my head without touching my neck!?

THOR

Most days I'd like to bash his head in, but he does have a point...



ODIN

Loki made a bet he shouldn't have, but as a result of his scheming, Sif's hair is now even more beautiful than it was before and Thor has the most powerful weapon in the cosmos!

(Loki is pleased with himself.  
The gods and dwarves exit.)

DWARVES

Scoundrel! Loki...trickster...

THOR

Hey, wait, a minute... I didn't get to kill that giant! Where's my veil!?

SCENE NINE (A) -- MONSTERS

ASTRID

No, no, no...there's no need to go back to the missing hammer story. I know the ending. What did I say!? Barbaric! Thor killing everyone at the wedding! And men dressing up as women! Well, I certainly hope there won't be any of *that* behavior at my wedding.

RAGNHILD

Your wedding! I forgot all about it! I can't believe Mother is going to marry you off to (pause) Erik Haraldson. What will father say?

ASTRID

He'll be pleased we'll make peace between our families. The fighting has gone on long enough.

EINAR

Will King Olaf in Norway release Father now? And the other men ...and the boys?

ASTRID

Let's hope so, Einar. Father's on his way home now. I'm sure of it. (pause) And... Erik's not that bad, really, for a Pagan.

RAGNHILD

I knew it! You like him! But are you sure? Mother can't force you. Father wouldn't.

ASTRID (MOTHER)

(from within)

Ragnhild! Astrid! Einar!

ASTRID

Mother wants me--the Christian-- married off before Erik's father changes his mind about the match. He's not too keen on a Christian in the family but both our farms  
(MORE)

ASTRID (cont'd)

depend on our union. We'll bring our lands together. She's announcing the news of the engagement, tonight...

(The volcano rumbles. Loki and Sigyn form the tableau with the bowl and snake dripping poison.)

TORA SVENSDOTTER

Inside, quickly, you three! The poison drips and Loki struggles. The earth won't stop shaking! This doesn't bode well! This is the hottest Midsummer's Eve I can ever remember. This year has already been far too warm. The glaciers are melting! I fear the end is near...

EINAR

Calm, mother, calm. The mountain let off some pressure and nothing more. Loki's not really tied up under the earth. Skadi's snake is not dripping poison on him! We're not meant to take the stories *literally*; they're (pause) *poetry*.

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Einar, I don't know where you young people get these strange ideas from!? You're spending far too much time with Sister Gudrid. And now you say Loki's *not* to blame for the earth shaking!? What *will* your father say when he returns!? The whole world is turning upside down!

RAGNHILD

You have to admit, Einar, it does make a better story: the dripping poison from the snake suspended for eternity above the fettered half god, half giant Loki! His obedient wife Sigyn at his side, holding a bowl to catch the poison till, uh the bowl is full... leaves his side for just one moment and ...drip! Aaaagony and the earth moves!

(The volcano rumbles again and the tableau fades.)

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Well Sigyn needs to hurry back with her bowl to Loki because we've a party to prepare for tonight. I can't do it alone. The slaves have run off thanks to today's "vote" (she glares at Astrid) and the earth won't stop shaking! (pause) Midsummer's Eve...the first your father has ever missed...

ASTRID

Oh mother. Please stop your worrying. The rumbling will stop soon. It always does. And Father *is* coming home. Not every day is Ragnarok!

THE THREE SIBLINGS

(teasingly)

It's the end of the world!

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Monsters! All three of you! Move! Inside!

EINAR

It could be worse, mother. Think about Loki's children.  
(pause) The trickster god--Loki--had three horrible  
monsters for children: Fenrir, the wolf, the giantess Hel  
and the Midgard serpent.

EINAR

The gods, like Mother, fear these monsters will bring on  
Ragnarok, the end of the world.

(Loki appears, triumphant)

SCENE NINE (B) -- MONSTERS CONT.

*Tyr and Thor are in a boat  
with a giant cauldron. Tyr  
is doing all the rowing.*

THOR

I had him, I tell you!

TYR

The Midgard serpent? You caught the Midgard serpent?! I  
don't believe you.

THOR

Yes! Well I caught him...nearly!

TYR

Next you'll be telling me you managed to charm Hel  
herself! (laughing) Hope you were on her good side! (no  
reaction) Oh, come on! That was funny, Thor. Where's your  
sense of humor? The goddess of the underworld...half  
beautiful woman, half rotting corpse... Hope you were on  
her good side?!

THOR

I'm not making this up, Tyr! Not this time. I nearly had  
him! But that fool giant of a father of yours let him go!  
(dramatically, looking out to the audience) There we  
were, far out at sea, fishing...

TYR

Fishing? That was your plan? To brew mead. Go fishing?

THOR

Well, yes. It's a long story...

TYR

Using me to get my stepfather's giant cauldron!?

THOR

Well, how else were we going to brew enough mead for all the gods of Asgard? Not much of party without mead.

TYR

Did you *have* to kill him? My stepfather, remember. The Giant Hymir?

THOR

Sorry about that Tyr. (pause) But at least we got the cauldron...and I could have gotten the Midgard serpent too...!

(Ensemble forms the Serpent)

THOR

There I was, pulling with all my might. Here (pulls on his hood) you play your stepfather! There I was, pulling with all my might! The Midgard serpent pulled so hard, my feet went through the bottom of the boat and just when I was about to reel the beast in, Hymir --that's you! Your silly stepfather!--cut the line and....I lost him!

(Sigyn is searching for Loki)

TYR

Thor lost the Midgard serpent *and*, as usual, completely lost his temper. (sighs) So all three of Loki's children are still alive and well...

SIGYN

Those *three monsters* of Loki's are offspring from an earlier...arrangement. Speaking of Loki where is he? He's been in such a bad mood ever since Odin had Tyr bring his son, that monstrous wolf Fenrir, to Valhalla! Loki!

TYR

So, yes, all three of Loki's *monstrous* children are still alive and well. But while Odin does his best to stop Loki's monstrous children from the part they will play against the gods of Asgard at end of the world, the end of the world *will come*. One day. (pause) But for now, Child Number One: the giant world serpent still encircles the oceans of our world. He's so long he bites his own tail. Child Number Two: Hel, half beauty and half... yuck... Well, Hel is confined -thankfully- to the dark depths of the underworld and Child Number Three, Fenrir, the Wolf, who was once only a pup, was raised, by me, in Asgard...

SCENE TEN - FENRIR

*The gods sit about feasting  
and watching the wolf,  
Fenrir, break himself free  
each time the gods try to*

*contain him. Heimdallr  
stands guard.*

FREYJA

Welcome Ran and your nine lovely daughters of the sea!

(Thor and Tyr carry in the  
cauldron)

RAN

More mead everyone! Thor and Tyr have returned with the  
cauldron big enough to brew enough mead for one and all  
in Asgard!

SAGA

It's about time, the mead was running out. (pause) Stop  
looking so glum Loki. Time works most things out.

LOKI

That's what I'm worried about....

RAN

Thank you, Freyja for inviting us here to Valhalla! To  
Tyr and Thor! Let's name two days of the week after them  
for this! What do you say? Tyrsgdag and Torsdag? Tuesday  
and Thursday!? Hip-hip--

GODS

Hurrah!

RAN

Hip-hip--

GODS

Hurrah!

SAGA AND LOKI

(halfheartedly)

Skol!

IDUNN

Apples first, everyone! We cannot live on mead alone!  
Freshly picked this morning, they're still covered in  
dew.

SIF

Oh, yes, we mustn't forget them. Thank you, darling  
Idunn. What would we do without you?

SNOTRA

Shrivel up and eventually die.

SAGA

She's a barrel of laughs, that one!

(Tyr approaches the wolf,  
Fenrir, with a rope or chain.)

Fenrir struggles at his bonds as  
they discuss the wolf)

TYR

Fenrir's growing awfully fast, All-Father, I really think  
it's time...we...contain him.

(Fenrir struggles.)

ODIN

Yes, if the prophecy of Ragnarok is true... this wolf  
will bring about my end.

THOR

(Sighing heavily) But which bonds have we not yet tried?  
He's broken every one of them!

ODIN

Fenris Wolf is certainly growing bigger by the day. But  
there's hope yet. There's always hope...

SIF

(falsely)

Go, Fenrir! Yeah! (to the others) How long can we keep  
this charade going?

SNOTRA

He's sure to catch on...

SAGA

He's just a dumb beast, quit your worrying, Snotra! Have  
a drink!

(Fenrir breaks free of the chain  
put upon him. And the gods feign  
enthusiasm. Odin joins Saga.)

IDUNN

SNOTRA

SAGA

Bravo! Well done! Clever you, Fenrir! Cheers, Big ears!

FREYJA

I've sent my handmaidens to Svartalfheim to consult with  
the dwarves. Surely the most skilled craftsmen of the  
cosmos will be able to forge a chain strong enough to  
hold him?!

(Hlin and Fulla return)

SAGA

(slightly giddy)

Oh, goodie! Here they come!

SNOTRA

Show some decorum, will you? Honestly. Such behavior in a  
goddess.

SAGA

(Patting the seat beside her)  
Come on up here, Snotra, have a drink! It'll do you good!

SNOTRA

No, thank you.

HLIN

(Pulling a ribbon from Fulla's box)  
Lady Freyja, we've returned with what you asked for.

SAGA

You expect that ribbon to hold the wolf? To hold off the end of the world?!

FULLA

It's no ordinary ribbon. It's name is Gleipnir--

SAGA

Don't you just love how all our things have proper names!? Gleipnir, Sleipnir, Draupnir--

HLIN

It was wrought from the sound of a cat's footsteps, the beard of a woman--

SAGA

Charming--

HLIN

...the roots of mountains, the breath of a fish, and the spittle of a bird.

SNOTRA

(taking notes)

I had no idea any of those things existed. Interesting...

FULLA

Against it, it is useless to struggle.

(Tyr approaches Fenrir with  
Gleipnir. The wolf sniffs at it)

TYR

(comprehending)

He suspects something...(listens) and refuses to be bound with it unless one of us lays his or her hand (pause) in his jaws as a ransom. If there is no treachery, and it is still a game to him, he'll consent to being bound with Gleipnir. But if we deceive him...

(Loki laughs scornfully. The  
gods whisper worriedly.)

TYR

Fine, I'll do it. I'll put my hand in his mouth. I've raised him since he was a pup. He trusts me. (pause) Easy now, Fenrir...

(He ties Fenrir up with Gleipnir. Fenrir struggles but the "ribbon" holds fast. Fenrir becomes furious and bites down on Tyr's hand. The gods laugh.)

TYR

(cradling his arm)

And this is funny, how??

(The joyous mood is broken.)

ODIN

Bring Fenris Wolf to some far away place where he'll remain until...

GODS

(menacingly)

Ragnarok.

SCENE ELEVEN

ASTRID

See! The stories are cruel, barbaric, uncivilized...

EINAR

Maybe, sometimes. But they're a reflection of the world we live in.

ASTRID

Lived in. We're Christian now, remember! Not pagans. The stories are a reflection of the world we lived in...

(Loud Midsummer Eve merriment.)

ASTRID

(conceding) Okay...live in. The stories are a reflection of the world we live in. It's chaotic, loud, and fu--

RAGNHILD

(Placing a crown on her head)

Full of Midsummer magic! Everyone's excited for tonight, Astrid! Come on! Stop being so serious. You used to love Midsummer's Eve!

ASTRID

(snapping back to her serious self) Heathen nonsense...

(Tora, their mother, looks for them again. Ragnhild runs off.)



TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Come along you three! The Volva, the Fortune-Teller, is on her way! Imagine, being blessed with her presence on Midsummer's eve!

ASTRID

Blessed with her presence (She scoffs) She's just an old witch!

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Astrid, the Norse rules of hospitality will still be respected regardless of what was voted at the Thing today! We may be Christians now, but we will still have some sense of decorum! The Volva, the witch, the wise woman, whatever you call her, is welcome tonight. Is that clear? So much depends on everything going well.

ASTRID

Yes, mother.

(Tora exits)

RAGNHILD

Here, Astrid. Your crown. (She places it on her sister's head) You look beautiful. I'm sure Erik will think so! And I've got my flowers all ready for my pillow!! Don't you just love Midsummer's Eve?! You wait all night for something stupendous to happen. Have the feeling something wonderful, something truly magical has to happen...

ASTRID

...and it almost never does. Ragnhild, it's the longest day in the year. The sun stops moving northward in the sky, and then begins tracking southward again as summer turns to back into winter. That's all it is. There's no magic. It's all superstitious nonsense! (She removes her crown) And putting flowers under your pillow on Midsummer's night is *not* going to show you the man of your dreams!

RAGNHILD

Says she who already has the man of her dreams...

ASTRID

I never said Erik was the man of my dreams! He's a pagan! A heathen.

EINAR

It could be worse, you could be married off to a giant, or worse, a troll...

ASTRID

Not another story of a Frost Giant wanting to marry Freyja again...

RAGNHILD

Ok, ready. Go.

SCENE TWELVE

*A Giant disguised as a  
Builder arrives in the  
court of Asgard, Valhalla.*

EINAR

A handsome builder arrived in Asgard one day and offered to build the gods a high wall around their home to protect them from Giants.

THOR

This is a great idea. I like it. I'm the best Giant Killer there is. Very, very good with my hammer. The best. But (pause) when I am away fighting giants, you'll be safe in Valhalla from all harm...

A GIANT (BUILDER)

I should be able to complete the wall by Midsummer. With the help of my horse, Svadilfari.

ODIN

And in payment you ask....?

A GIANT (BUILDER)

I ask only for the goddess Freyja. (pause) Oh, and I'll take the sun and the moon as well.

(The gods look to Freyja)

FREYJA

Oh, no! Not again! Absolutely not. I am taking my cats out for a spin! I'll be back shortly and I don't want any more talk of sending me off with any Man, Dwarf, Giant or Troll who walks into Asgard and asks to have me! Is that clear, everyone?

GODS

Yes, Freyja...

(Freyja leaves, pulling on her  
furs and gloves.)

LOKI

I've an idea!

SIF

(Adjusting her hair)

Oh, dear...you know what trouble those usually lead to...

LOKI

Listen. I suggest we have the Builder build the wall and have the Builder pay for it!

SIF

The Builder will build the wall *and* have the Builder pay for it!??

LOKI

I suggest he must finish the wall *before* the *start* of *summer*, not midsummer, with *only* his horse to help him.

HEIMDALLR

It's impossible! Even with his horse, he'll never complete it before the summer. *And* he'll have finished at least half the work for us. We lose nothing! And we'll be *that* much closer to having a wall around Asgard to protect us from those giants!

THOR

(Working it out)

The Builder will build the wall and the builder will pay for it?!

HEIMDALLR

How clever! Well done, Loki.

ODIN

Okay, builder, you've got a deal. You can set to work immediately but *only* with the help of your horse, Svadilfari.

(The gods watch the Builder work.)

LOKI

Why, that's a fine horse you have there, Builder. So very strong...(sounds of labor, horse whinnying) working so fast...

(Time passes. Idunn joins Freyja who stands worriedly watching the Builder work.)

IDUNN

(innocently)

My, how fast that Builder and his horse are working! At this rate he'll be finished by the start of the summer... The wall is nearly complete...

FREYJA

Loki!

LOKI

I, I... can fix this! I've got an idea...

SIF

Oh, not again!

SIGYN

Loki, where are you off to... disguised as a horse?!

(Sound of a horse galloping.)

IDUNN

Look there, a mare! What a beautiful horse she is!

FREYJA

Oh, yes, *she's* a beauty alright...hmmm...Loki...?

(Sound of Svadilfari, the horse  
neighing. And then another horse  
galloping.)

IDUNN

Oh, look, Freyja, the Builder's horse is running with the  
mare! What a lovely pair they make!

FREYJA

Oh, yes! I see now. Bravo Loki! Well done! Run like the  
wind!

IDUNN

Look, the Builder's horse is chasing after her!

(Builder calls for his horse)

A GIANT (BUILDER)

Svadilfari! Come back! I'll never finish the wall in time  
without you! Ahhh! That female horse has led my stallion  
astray! Svadilfari! (Sniffs the air) Ah, I smell  
trickery... (His voice changes) You've tricked me you  
deceitful gods of Asgard!

(Growing in anger he reveals  
himself to be a Giant.)

THE GODS

Ah, a Jotun! Thor! A Giant! Hide everyone! Thor! We need  
you and your hammer!

THOR

Here I am, with my amazing hammer. Don't forget, no  
matter how I throw it, it always comes back to me. It's  
tremendous, really great.

(He gets ready to throw it and  
freezes mid-action as the story  
is brought to a halt. All the  
gods freeze.)

RAGNHILD

(She stops writing)

I don't like this part.

ASTRID

No, I agree. It's not fair. The gods break their promise  
to the giant AND kill him!?

EINAR

Would you rather the Giant be *allowed* to carry off the goddess Freyja?

ASTRID

An agreement is an agreement. They've broken their oath. For the peace of Asgard...

RAGNHILD

Astrid...what is wrong?

ASTRID

Nothing. (pause) It's just a story, isn't it!? Go on, Einar.

(The gods unfreeze and gather round Thor in congratulations.)

SIGYN

Loki? Where has he disappeared to this time? *I* would never leave his side but he's always running off!

EINAR

Indeed, Loki stayed away for more than a year and returned to Asgard with a beautiful young horse, an eight-legged grey-white colt called (pause) Sleipnir.

(Loki returns. Sigyn is relieved to see him again.)

LOKI

I've brought you a gift, All-Father.

(A horse whinnies in the distance.)

LOKI

Sleipnir. The swiftest horse in the cosmos.

SIF

He has eight legs!?

LOKI

Just don't ask me to tell you where he comes from....

(The gods gossip and laugh.)

SIF

So, I don't get it. Loki turned himself into that beautiful *female* horse? Ran off into the woods! Svadilfari, the stallion, ran behind him? Or her? And then Loki returns a year later with an eight legged horse. What's so funny about that?

(Saga whispers into Sif's ear)

SIF

Oh! So Loki's a...Congratulations! You're a mommy!

(The gods fall about laughing-  
and freeze but Loki storms off  
in shame.)

SCENE THIRTEEN

RAGNHILD

Astrid. Are you *only* marrying Erik to bring peace between our families?

ASTRID

There are worse boys. And I can still divorce him if things don't work out.

RAGNHILD

For now, Astrid. As you say, we're Christian now. Who knows if the laws will allow divorce in the future.

ASTRID

(gravely)

No one knows the future...

EINAR

It's not like you can just test each other out for nine nights like the god Njord and giantess Skadi did.

ASTRID

(shocked at the impropriety)

Test each other out? The gods tested each other out? No, I think not. Alright. Another story. How did *that* marriage work out?

(Another party. Skadi, giantess and goddess of skiing, enters in full ski gear. She clears her throat to get their attention.)

SKADI

Ahem... Ahem! I demand compensation for my father's death! You killed him.

ODIN

Who was her father again?

FREYJA

The giant, Thiazzi. The one who kidnapped Idunn.

SAGA

*She's* the daughter of a giant?

ODIN

Oh, yes, Thiazzi. We're very sorry about that...uh?

SKADI

Skadi.

ODIN

Skadi. But Thiazzi, the Giant, your father, *did* kidnap our most precious Idunn and deprive us of her golden apples of youth.

IDUNN

It was the most exciting day of my life!

SKADI

But why did he kidnap Idunn? Why would he do such a thing?

SIGYN

Well, Loki told me, one evening, when Odin and Loki were traveling far from Asgard...

SCENE FOURTEEN

*Loki and Odin sit around a fire. A giant bird, created by the ensemble, sits above them. Ragnild and Astrid become engrossed in the story. Einar attempts to continue writing without them, but grows frustrated with his efforts.*

ODIN

Has your meat cooked yet, Loki? Hurry up! It will soon be dark, we're far from the safety of Asgard. Let's get going.

LOKI

It's not my fault I can't just drink wine like you! I don't understand why it's not cooking. The fire is hot!?

EAGLE

If you will give me some of that meat, I will release my magical charm and allow you to cook it.

ODIN

It would seem if you want to eat, you'll need to give the eagle what he's asking for.

(Loki offers up some meat but the eagle takes the best piece.)

LOKI

(Loki strikes at the eagle)

He's taken the best part! Get off, back off, you mangy...!

(The eagle grabs Loki and pulls him off the ground, flapping its wings. Odin follows along behind, looking up in distress.)

LOKI

Okay, okay, let me go!

EAGLE

Only if you swear to bring me Idunn and her magical apples.

LOKI

Okay, okay, look she's there, just there! Put me down!!

(Idunn is picking apples.)

IDUNN

Hello Loki. You've not had your apple today. (reciting the proverb) An apple a day...

LOKI

(impatiently)

You know, Idunn, there is an even lovelier apple orchard growing *outside* the walls of Asgard. You should come with me and see them for yourself. But *do* bring some apples from Asgard...so we can...compare. What do you say?

IDUNN

Apples *more* beautiful than these? It's not possible. Surely the gods would know of such a grove and would have told me?!

(The eagle carries her away, screaming as the gods enter, also crying in pain, aging rapidly.)

FULLA

What's happening? My back is aching all of a sudden.

HLIN

My lady, I feel so weak. I cannot pull my bow...

THOR

Your hair, Sif! It's gone grey.

SIF

And look at that belly you've got all of a sudden.

HEIMALLR

My hearing is not quite what it should be. I used to be able to hear everyone chew, it was horribly annoying.

TYR

And your golden teeth are looking a bit tarnished, there, Heimdallr...(yawning) I think I need a nap.



SIF

What's happening? (dramatically) I've...a wrinkle!!

(Odin enters, slowly)

FREYJA

Odin! We are (pause) aging!

ODIN

It would seem someone has kidnapped Idunn!

(They look around and know.)

GODS

Loki?! What have you done *now*?!

LOKI

I...I had to! The eagle took me and then kidnapped Idunn!

FREYJA

After her, Loki! Hurry! My falcon feathers!

(Loki flies after Idunn)

IDUNN

Here! Loki Hurry! Take me home to Asgard before it's too late.

(Loki returns Idunn to the gods who gather around her as she hands out magic apples. They slowly regain their youth.)

IDUNN

Thank you for rescuing me, Loki, but did you really have to turn me into a nut?

LOKI

You were easier to carry that way...

IDUNN

And you (to the gods) set fire to that horrible kidnapping giant Thiazzi and I miss the whole thing! (pause) Do you all realize that I spend every day in the orchard of Asgard collecting apples for you lot!? And then I'm kidnapped by a giant! I finally get out and see the world! It was the most exciting day of my life and I miss it!

(The scene returns to Asgard)

SKADI

I'm sorry. I can't believe my father would do such a thing: kidnap your precious Idunn.

SCENE FIFTEEN

ODIN

Well, the past is the past. Usually. And you're just in time. We're having a contest! You shall receive compensation, Skadi, for the death of your father, the kidnapping giant Thiazzi and join us here in Asgard.

FREYJA

Okay, everyone! Last week we decided that I have the loveliest hair...

SIF

I didn't vote for Freyja...

THOR

(patting her head)

There, there, Sif.

FREYJA

This week we're playing: Who has the most beautiful feet in Asgard!?

ASTRID

What idiots these gods are!

RAGNHILD

That's the whole point. They're just like us. Just as funny, jealous, wicked (pause) and beautiful!

EINAR

Okay, please read back to me what we have so far...I got lost, it went so fast!

(Ragnhild reads, recaps the scene)

RAGNHILD

Okay, Skadi arrives in Jotunheim to ask compensation for the death of her father, the giant Thiazzi who kidnapped the goddess Idunn along with her magic life-giving apples. In compensation for killing the giant, the gods let the giant's daughter Skadi choose a husband from among them but only by looking at their feet.

(The gods reveal their feet.)

ODIN

Come along and choose your husband, Skadi...

SKADI

By looking at his feet?

ODIN

Yes, feet only.

(Skadi inspects their feet.)

SKADI

Ah! Surely, these beautiful toes must belong to the most beautiful of the gods. Baldr. I wish above all else to marry Baldr!

(She has chosen Njord, a god of the Sea, and is disappointed.)

NJORD

Sorry, Skadi. I'm Njord. God of the Sea. I hope you're not too disappointed you didn't choose Baldr and that you'll take me instead.

SAGA

Their marriage didn't last long. I heard they tried and tried, but they couldn't agree on where to live.

SIF

I heard they spent nine nights in Njord's home on the sea-coast where the men build their long ships...

(The sound of men hammering boats together and seagulls squawking incessantly. Njord sleeps; Skadi is wide awake.)

SKADI

I can't stand this racket! Bang, bang, bang... And the incessant sound of the seagulls is driving me mad!

(Skadi and Njord shift sleeping locations. This time Njord is unable to sleep while Skadi sleeps deeply at his side.)

SAGA

And I heard they then spent the next nine nights in Skadi's home deep in the mountains of Jotunheim. With the wind and the wolves...

(Sound of the winter wind and wolves. They sit together, Njord shivering with cold and fright.)

NJORD

I miss the sea. The sound of the waves. I can't sleep with the wolves howling all night and the wind! It whips through the valleys. I'm freezing to the bone.

SAGA/SIF

The marriage didn't last long. And they parted company.

(They go their separate ways.)

ASTRID

Sounds like mother and father. They're so different.

RAGNHILD

But they love us. That's what holds them together.  
(pause) Can you imagine the pain Odin and Freyja must  
have felt at losing their son Baldr? It really was  
Ragnarok, the end of the world.

SCENE SIXTEEN

*Freyja and the gods await  
the return of the  
handmaidens. Skadi has now  
joined the gods.*

FULLA

My lady. We've scoured the universe and we've asked every  
living...

HLIN

And non-living thing, to swear an oath not to harm our  
beloved--

HLIN AND FULLA

Baldr.

HLIN

Except the mistletoe.

FULLA

Yes, that one we forgot.

FREYJA

Well, mistletoe, what possible harm could it do? Odin,  
good news! Everything in the cosmos, living and non  
living, has sworn not to harm our son, Baldr!

ODIN

I declare our son, Baldr, free from all harm!

FREYJA

To celebrate, let's play another game!

GODS

Let's throw things at Baldr since he's invincible. Yeah!  
What fun! Hey, Baldr! So, you're Iron man now are you?  
Nothing can harm you? Let's see.

(They throw rocks, sticks etc at  
Baldr. All are impressed to see  
nothing hurts him. Loki enters  
as Fulla)

LOKI/FULLA

My dear Lady, did *everything* in the cosmos swear an oath  
to protect Baldr from harm? I don't recall...

FREYJA

Yes, everything!

HLIN

(suspiciously)

Everything but the mistletoe, my Lady! We just said so... Fulla? But we agreed, what harm could mistletoe do to Baldr?

(Loki barges his way bitterly through the joyful gods' game.)

LOKI

What harm indeed...?

SIGYN

Loki, what are you up to now?!

(Loki whittles mistletoe.)

LOKI

Baldr this and Baldr that and Baldr is so meek, and mild and marvelous (pause) but cannot withstand an arrow made of mistletoe!

(Loki approaches Hodr, the blind brother of Baldr.)

LOKI

Hey, Hodr! How can you not be jealous of your twin brother? The most loved of all the Aesir? Look at all the attention he's getting. And you, poor blind Hodr, are missing all the fun. (pause) Want to have some fun too?! Here. I'll point you in the right direction and you pull. There.

(The mistletoe arrow is launched and hits Baldr. Baldr falls. The gods are in shock.)

GODS

He's dead! But how? Baldr, he's fallen. He's dead!

FREYJA

Baldr! Oh my son....!!

ODIN

Tremble and fear, the end is soon near. (pause) Sigyn. Go! Find Loki, your husband, and tell him he is no longer welcome here in Asgard. Like his monstrous son Fenrir the wolf, he is to be bound deep beneath the earth!

(Heimdallr restrains Loki)

SKADI

...and I'll hang a snake above his head which will drip, drip, drip its poisonous venom until the end of days!

(Skadi holds a snake above Loki.  
Sigyn sits near him with a bowl)

SIGYN

I'll stay with you, Loki. By your side. As always. I'll hold a bowl to catch the drops of venom to spare you some pain. But when the bowl is full, I'll need to leave you, to empty it, for just a moment. But I'll always return. It's not the end of the world...not yet.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

*Two families gather to  
celebrate Midsummer's Eve.  
The girls wear flower  
crowns; everyone is merry.*

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Dear Guests, you are welcome to our home. My husband, Gudbrand, would wish nothing else on such a day. It has been an historic day. But what feels indeed like the end of the world *could* in fact be the beginning...

(She lifts her drinking horn,  
the others follow suit.)

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Let us celebrate the longest day of the year and the healing between our feuding families (nods to Erik's father) with a toast.

HARALD HAAKONSSON

Thank you, Tora. I drink to the return of your husband, Gudbrand, and the men with him. (pause) Here's to a good year and peace!

ENSEMBLE

Til árs ok friðar!

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

And to Erik and...

(Fence-Sitter enters with news.)

FENCE-SITTER

She's here! She's here. The old woman is here!

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Make way, please! There, could you move there. I'm so sorry. We've set a place of honor for her...ah, there.

(A woman, a volva enters--  
dressed as described in Erik the  
Red's Saga--in a cloak with a  
staff. She is seeress, a  
fortune-teller.)

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

My family, my friends...my husband, sadly, is --

VOLVA

On his way home.

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

Can you know this for sure? Please tell me.

VOLVA

Are there women present who knows the old songs?

TORA SVENSDOTTIR

The old songs? Anyone? My mother used to sing them. I never paid much attention. Perhaps Astrid remembers, she sings like a lark. She'll remember! She's old enough.

SISTER GUDRID

Astrid? The Christian? Sing pagan songs?

VOLVA

The old songs.

ASTRID

You want me to sing the old Pagan songs? But we're meant to be Christian now (pause) I can't...

HARALD HAAKONSSON

Is this how things run without your husband here, Tora? I'm not sure Erik is ready for such a strong-willed wife.

ERIK

I am ready for a strong-willed wife, Father. As long as it's Astrid. And I will let her decide for herself whether she will sing or not.

ASTRID

I...I...

VOLVA

Astrid. "Peace, Beauty and Strength of the gods" Helping me help the others (pause) to see past the chaos of this world will not make any less a Christian of you, Astrid Gudbrandsdotter, soon to be wife to Erik Haraldson.

(Gasps of surprise, joy)

ASTRID

I ...don't know...I have no magical powers. I don't remember the songs, not really. It's been many years...

ENSEMBLE

Oh, please try. We'll remember. Together! We so much wish to hear what she has to tell us! It may be the last time! Just one last song!?

VOLVA

(Closing her eyes)

You must begin (pause) now.

(Hesitantly, Astrid begins her song "Drømte mig en drøm i nat"\* which grows more and more confident. Offers of peace are extended between the pagans and Christians)

I DREAMED A DREAM..  
LAST NIGHT I DREAMED OF SILK AND OF FINE FURS  
ON A PILLOW SOFT AND DEEP  
I COULD NOT BE DISTURBED  
I SLEPT UNTIL THE MORNING

AND IN MY DREAM I DREAMED LAST NIGHT  
I DREAMT I JOINED A DANCE  
TOOK THE HAND 'T WAS OFFERED ME  
AND SO IT WAS MY CHANCE  
TO DANCE UNTIL THE MORNING

AND AS THE DANCE WENT ROUND AND ROUND  
IT STOPPED SO SUDDENLY  
I FOUND MYSELF UPON THE GROUND  
WITH NO ONE TO HEAR ME  
TO HOPE FOR A CLEAR BRIGHT MORNING

AS MY DREAM LIKE ALL DREAMS FADE  
THE MEMORY STAYS WITH ME  
OF SILKEN GOWNS, OF FACES, HANDS  
AND ONE WHO CALLED TO ME  
TO AWAKE TO A CLEAR BRIGHT MORNING

SCENE EIGHTEEN

*Erik joins Astrid to form Ask and Embla. The ensemble creates Yggdrasil once more. The Norns gather at its roots, carving runes. Einar returns to reciting. Ragnhild writes them down.*

EINAR

One day in this new universe Odin and his brother were walking along the seashore and found two pieces of driftwood. They breathed life and spirit into the wood--driftwood from Yggdrasil--and formed Ask and Embla, the first humans.

(Ragnhild stops writing.)

RAGNHILD

But the end of the story, Einar!? What happens to Baldr?



You've skipped it! You've gone back to the beginning! You can't just leave it like this! (pause) Didn't you say we should understand the stories as poetry? Not literally! We human beings have not literally been carved out of wood, out of an ash tree or an elm tree or any kind of tree! (pause) If this is all poetry you've been telling, then I have to believe the end of the world is not literal either! But you've skipped it, Einar! (pause) Will there be Ragnarok? Tell me there will be no end to the world, that it's just poetry, a story? Right? I don't want to write that part!

NORNS

Can you carve them? Can you read them? Can you stop them?

RAGNHILD

No! Of course not, whatever you're carving ...fate is fate! But if the stories of our lives are already written, what's the point? (pause) Will there be an end? A Ragnarok? I wish to know, I want to see!

NORNS

Someday, after three great winters with no summer in between, it will be an age of desperation. Brother will kill brother. The wolves Skoll and Hati will swallow up the sun and the moon and the stars too will disappear. Yggdrasil will tremble and the nine worlds it holds together will fall into the sea.

(The tree Yggdrasil breaks apart. Heimdallr stands ready with his horn)

NORNS

Heimdallr will blast his Gjallarhorn and the Twilight of the gods will begin.

(Heimdallr moves to blow the horn but Ragnhild stops him)

RAGNHILD

(To the Norns)

But there will be a new beginning, right? Right? Stay! Tell me!

(The Norns leave. Einar takes up the paper and ink and begins to write, confidently. Astrid comforts her sister and turns her to show her Einar, writing.)

ASTRID

Ragnhild, look. Einar is writing. (pause) You are right. It would seem there is some Midsummer magic after all.

ENSEMBLE

"In the beginning out of the depths of the sea emerged a new earth, green and fair..."

(In a toast, the ensemble hold up drinking horns)

ENSEMBLE

Til árs ok friðar! Here's to a good year and peace!

THE END.

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