

# NORSE MYTHS

MONSTERS  
AND  
VIKING  
VOYAGERS



**B**  
I  
G  
P  
I  
C  
T  
U  
R  
E  
P  
R  
E  
S  
S

STEPHEN DAVIES  
SEARRA MILLER

COVER NOT  
FINAL

# TABLE OF

# CONTENTS

8 WHO WERE THE NORSEMEN?

10 THE CREATION STORY

12 MEET THE GODS

14 THE THREAT OF IDUN'S APPLES

20 HOW THE MYTHS EXPLAINED THE WORLD

22 TREASURES OF THE GODS

28 HOW THE MYTHS CAME TO US

30 THOR AND THE GIANTS

36 MYTHICAL CREATURES AND MONSTERS

38 THE DEATH OF BALDER

44 DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

46 SIGURD AND FAFNIR THE DRAGON

52 THE VIKINGS

54 RAGNAROK

60 A MYTHIC MAP OF NORSE MYTHOLOGY

# MEET THE GODS

Nam quist, odi idellab ipiciis dipiducilicii oditiat invent qui nis minciestrum con porum fugia sit aligend ignatium del et litatis nate et inum as por adi ommolentio cus expellit ionsequam, ut



ODIN

Odin 'Allfather' created humans and also many of the gods. The ravens on his shoulders are called Huginn (Thought) and Muninn (Memory). Arrogant and often cruel, Odin is a god to be feared above all others.



THOR

Strong, loveable and a teeny bit dim, Thor rides in a chariot pulled by two goats, Snanler and Grinder. He uses his incredible strength to protect Asgard from giants and monsters.



FRIGG

Foremost of all the goddesses, Frigg is the wife of Odin and the mother of Balder and Hod. She can see into other realms and even tell the future.



LOKI

Mischievous trickster Loki is always getting himself and others into trouble. He uses powerful shapeshifting magic to turn himself into a fly, a fish or even a giant.



SIF

Thor's wife Sif is famous for her long, silky blonde hair. Of all the gods and goddesses in Asgard, she is by far the vainest. Her son Ull is a fantastic archer and a superfast skier.



BALDER

With his handsome face, wise speech and generous character, Balder is the best of all the gods. In fact, his goodness makes him literally glow.



TYR

Tyr is the brave but reckless god of war. His hand was bitten off by a monstrous wolf called Fenrir.



FREYR

Freyr is the god of fertility and growth. He is the one to thank for plentiful harvests and healthy children.



FREYA

Beautiful Freya is the goddess of battle. She rides in a chariot pulled by cats and owns a falcon skin that enables her to fly.



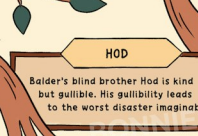
HONIR

Honir loves accompanying Odin and Loki on their adventures. He is very indecisive, though, and he will usually answer with a vague grunt!



HEIMDALL

Heimdall, watchman of the gods, guards the Bifrost bridge day and night. His eyes and ears are so sharp, he can spot grasshoppers on the distant horizon and hear the wool growing on a sheep!



HOD

Balder's blind brother Hod is kind but gullible. His gullibility leads to the worst disaster imaginable.



IDUN

Idun is a cheerful, carefree goddess, whose apples contain the secret to eternal youth. Whenever a god begins to grow old, one bite will make them young again.

# TREASURES OF THE GODS

Thor's wife Sif was famous in Asgard for her long, blonde hair. It draped around her shoulders like a curtain of finely spun gold.



"Aah, another good-hair day!"



One night, while all of Asgard slept, the sneaker Loki changed into a gashly and buzzed into Sif's bedroom through the keyhole. Then he changed back into his usual form, drew a glinting dagger and sliced off all Sif's hair.



"She used to be Sif but now she's 'Babbler'!"

In the morning, Sif was inconsolable. As for Thor, he immediately knew who the culprit must be.

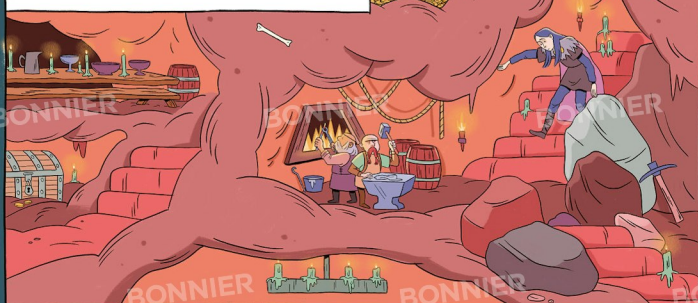


Loki soon came to regret his prank, and vowed to repair the damage he had done.



"Call out, will you? I'll ask the dwarves to spin her some new golden hair!"

Loki hurried over the Bifrost bridge. He slipped into a cave, then down into the domain of the dwarves. Loki hurried through a maze of underground chambers. The resounding clang of a hammer and the swoosh of bellows led him to a fiery cavern, where dwarven goldsmiths were hard at work.



Loki explained to the sons of Ivaldi that they would be richly rewarded by the gods if they could craft for Sif a skein of silky, golden hair.



"You mean a wig?"

"None like magic hair."

The bellows puffed. The hammer clanged. The magic spinning wheel spun, weaving together a golden mane.



"We have gold left over. We'll make gifts for Freyr and Odin, too."

"It's glorious."

With the extra gold, the dwarves made a ship called Skidbladnir for Freyr and a spear named Gungnir for Odin.



"When Freyr unfolds Skidbladnir, she will be big enough for all the gods to sail in."

"When Odin throws Gungnir, she will always hit her target."

Loki thanked the sons of Ivaldi, and left with the three treasures. On his way up to the world of men, he passed another workshop and heard two other dwarven goldsmiths squabbling.



"You hit my thumb!"

"It was in the way!"

Cunning Loki entered the workshop and showed Brokk and Eitri the gifts which their rivals had made for the gods. Brokk scoffed and sat down at his bellows. Eitri tasted and went over to his forge.



"We too shall make gifts for the gods, Loki."

"What will you give us if the gods prefer our gifts?"

"I'll give you my head."

Loki was eager to get more gifts for the gods, but he also wanted to keep his head. As Brokk and Eitri got to work, the trickster shapeshifted into a gashly and, using the very sharp sting in his tail, Loki secretly attacked the dwarves.



"Buzz off!"

Upon Loki's return to Asgard, all of the gods gathered in the assembly hall to receive their special dwarven gifts. Loki smirked, thinking of the trick he played on Brokk and Eitri.



An excited murmur ran around the hall as Loki distributed the gifts from the sons of Ivaldi. There was new hair for Sif, a ship for Frey and a spear for Odin. Soon, it was Brokk and Eitri's turn to be the gift-givers.



First, Frey received the golden boar Gullinbursti. The boar was faster than a horse and he glowed in the dark.



Next, Odin was given the golden arm-ring Draupnir. It would multiply eightfold every nine days!



Finally, Brokk gave Thor the golden hammer Mjollnir. No matter how far Thor threw it, the hammer would always return to his hand!



The gods were grateful for the gifts from the sons of Ivaldi, but they were THRILLED with the gifts Brokk and Eitri. They proclaimed the brothers the winners of the Greatest Golden Gifts rosette.



Brokk and Eitri revealed to the gods that a gnatfly had attacked them while they were making the gifts.



Eitri's triumphant snile twisted into a menacing grin as he turned to face Loki.



As for the trickster, Loki cursed his own rashness for ever agreeing to a bet.



From then on, the dwarves' golden gifts made Asgard a safer place to live. With Thor's hammer, any frost giant would have to be very brave - or very stupid - to venture across the Bifrost bridge.



So when the hammer went missing one day, Thor was distraught.



Loki volunteered to go and search for Thor's missing hammer.



It didn't take much for Thor to agree.



Loki flew across the Utgard Sea, all the way to Jotunheim. Looking down, he saw a giant filling in a freshly dug hole.



Loki swooped down and landed beside the giant.

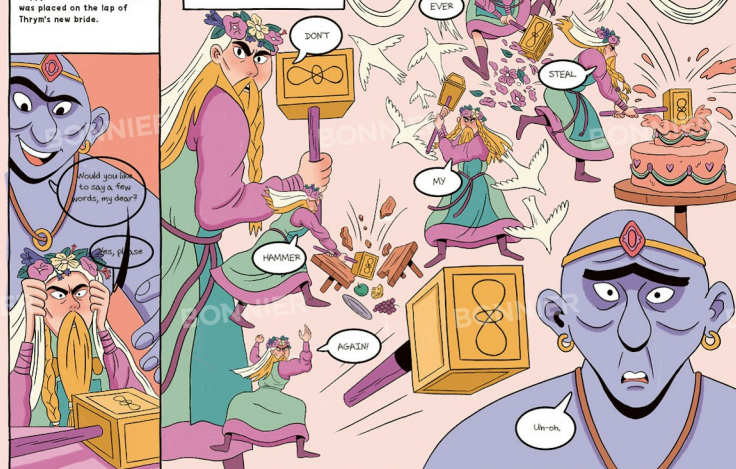
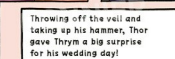
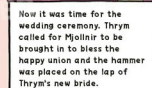
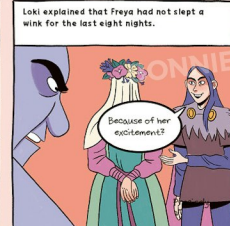
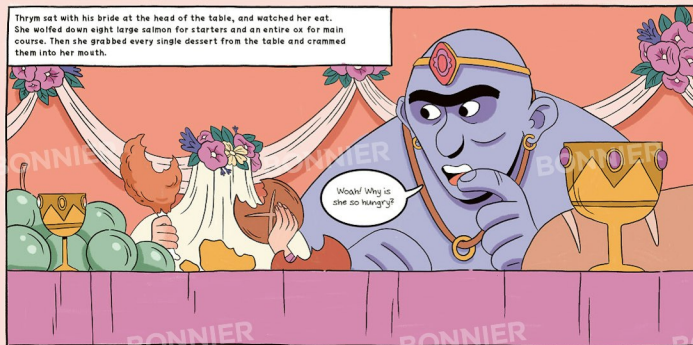
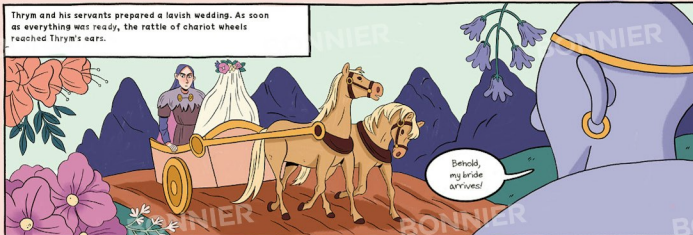


Thrym's lies did not last long.



The evil giant promised to return the hammer - on one condition...









Thor went outside and saw a colossal giant lying in the clearing, fast asleep. What they had felt and heard was not an earthquake; it was the giant's mighty snores!



Thor took a long run-up. He raised mighty Mjolnir high in the air...



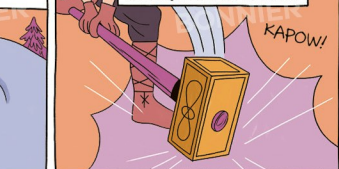
The giant stirred ...



... then rolled over and went back to sleep.



The snoring resumed. Thor was FURIOUS!



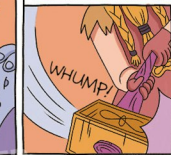
The giant sat up ...



... and promptly fell back asleep again.



Thor could not understand it. Mjolnir had never failed him before. He summoned all of his energy and rage for one last strike.



As the sun rose, the giant noticed Thor for the first time.



Thor's giant-slaying had got off to a bad start, but it could only get better. He asked Skrymir where the other giants lived, and Skrymir agreed to show him.



The travellers gaped at each other realising that they were each going to have to choose a talent. Canning Loki eyed the giant's dining table, which groaned under the weight of chopped meat.



Loki started at one end of the table and Logi started at the other. They chomped and chewed and munched and crunched, devouring the feast before them.



Loki had eaten all of the meat on his half of the table and had left the bones. But Logi the giant had eaten all the bones as well.



Next it was Thiafi's turn to share his talent. Knees trembling, he stood before the giants.



The whole assembly went outside and the Giant king marked out a race course. The runners kept next to each other on the frosty grass, staring ahead at the finish line...



The runners flew along the course like greased lightning. Hugi was hot on Thiafi's heels.





The giant lengthened his stride and overtook the straggling teenager. Hugi won the race with time enough to turn and welcome Thiafi at the finish line.



You took your time!

The Giant King turned to Thor.



Your turn, soon. Let me guess... throwing the hammer?

I have a better idea.

Back inside the castle, the king's cup-bearer brought Thor an enormous horn.



Gimme.

We giants can empty the whole horn in one gulp.



Thor drank, but each gulp seemed to him like a vast tide of liquid. He quickly ran out of breath and had to give up.



The level has hardly gone down at all!

The Giant King laughed and suggested that Thor try something else. He pointed to a cat which the younger giants lifted to test their strength.



If you can lift Mr Pustekins, we'll be impressed.



Bahahaha! You only managed to lift one paw!

Thor was incensed.



Right, that's if I'll wrestle one of you lot.

The King called forth his nanny, Auntie Eli. Thor couldn't believe his eyes when he saw an old woman hobble towards him.



Hello, dear.

Auntie Eli floored Thor with her wrestling moves.



And that!

Take that!

And this!

Talent night was over. Everyone feasted and fell asleep. In the morning, Thor was still miserable from last night's humiliation.



Let's get out of here.

The travellers left the castle and headed for Midgard. As they made their escape, the Giant King caught up with them.



Don't be too downhearted about Talent Night, Thor. I used a teeny bit of magic.

What do you mean?

The Giant King explained that not everything had been as it seemed. The talent night had been an elaborate trick to teach Thor and his friends a lesson...



Thiafi was fast, but Hugi was thought itself disguised as a giant. Nothing is faster than the speed of thought.

Loki was a fast eater, but my cook Loki was wise in disguise. Wise he turns up everything in his path.

Mr Pustekins was actually Jormungard, the magical serpent. I'm impressed that you managed to lift even one paw.

Each time you hit me with your hammer in the forest, I cushioned the blow with an entire mountain to protect myself. Just look what you did to these!

The end of the drinking horn was in the sea. When you get back to the beach, you'll see how far the tide has gone out after your slingshot gulps.

Auntie Eli is Old Age. No one can defeat the passing of time, Thor, not even you!



Wait... you're Sigmund?

Since that day, Thor and Loki have been very careful to stay the right side of the Utgard Sea.



Peace at last...

Surprise! Now, off to Asgard with you, and no more talk of giant haming!

# THE DEATH OF BALDER

Balder was the son of Odin and Frigg. He was the fairest of all the gods and he spread light and joy wherever he went.



But one morning, Balder came down to breakfast trembling. He'd had a nightmare about his own death.



Frigg travelled the nine realms and asked everything in nature to swear an oath promising not to harm Balder. She talked to every animal, every metal, every plant, insect and rock. It took a while.



When every substance under heaven had sworn the oath, Odin decided that it would be wise to test Balder's protection. Idun lobbed a golden apple at him...and it bounced off harmlessly.



Testing Balder's protection was fun. Round things bounced off him. Sharp things veered away from him. Snakes refused to bite.



Loki was the only god not joining in with the merrymaking. He watched from outside the hall, seething with hatred and contempt.



Loki shapeshifted into an old woman. He went to Frigg's hall and sidled up to her.



The old woman told Frigg that some poor soul was being stoned in Odin's hall. Frigg replied that it was nothing to worry about. Everything in nature had taken an oath not to harm Balder.



Loki hurried to the oak tree and found the mistletoe. He chose the biggest sprig, stripped it bare and sharpened the tip.



Loki hurried back to Odin's hall and found the party still in full swing.



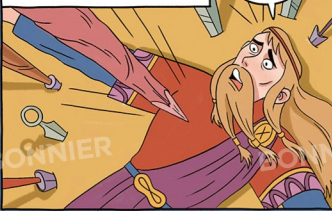
When the blind god Hod was asked to throw something at Balder at first he said no.



Loki slipped the mistletoe dart into Hod's hand, and guided Hod's arm to throw it hard and fast.



Unlike the spears and arrows, the mistletoe dart did not veer off course.



And, unlike the apples and stones, the dart did not bounce off Balder's godly protection, instead it pierced his heart.



The brilliant Balder was dead. His once bright light was now nothing but darkness. The assembly soon realised who was to blame. But the evil mastermind had already slipped away.



Frigg rose to her feet with fire in her eyes. She declared that one of the gods should go and see Hel, Mistress of the Dead, and plead with her for the return of Balder.



Hermod, Odin's son, was strong of arm and fleet of foot. He leapt onto Sleipnir's back and galloped off across the Bifrost bridge.



The gods built a funeral pyre in Balder's ship, Ringhorn. They wept and waved goodbye as it drifted out onto the water.



The only god not at Balder's funeral was Hermod. He was still gallopping towards Hel, through gloomy mountain passes and pitch black valleys.



After nine nights of non-stop galloping, Hermod reached the gold-roofed bridge across the river Gjöll. A hooded sentry raised her hand to stop him.

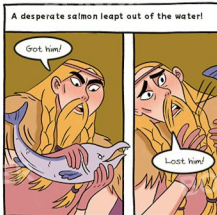
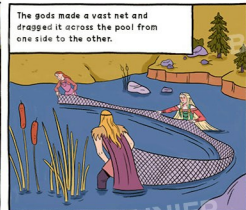
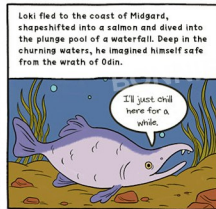
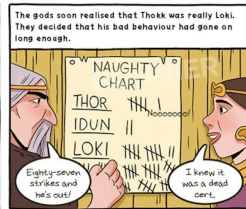
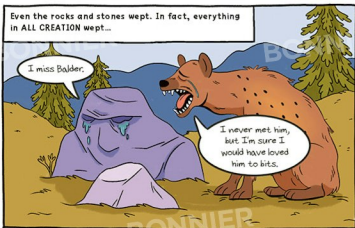
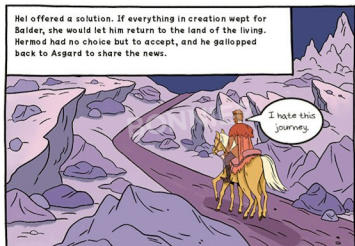


Midgard hesitated. The Land of the Dead was for the dead, but Hermod was alive. In the end, though, she let him pass.



In one mighty bound, Sleipnir jumped over the iron gates of Eljudnir.





# SIGURD AND FAENIR THE DRAGON

A powerful magician called Hreidmar lived in Midgard with his three sons: Regin, Otter and Faenir.



The eldest, Regin, was a swordsmith. He spent his days forging swords out of iron, silver or gold.



Otter was a fisherman. He took the form of an otter by day and human by night.



The youngest, Faenir, did not have a job – unless evil-doing counts as a job.



One winter's day, Odin, Loki and Honir crossed the Bifrost bridge and went exploring in Midgard. After an exhausting walk, they reached a thunderous waterfall and decided to have a well-deserved rest.



When Odin and Honir woke from their nap, they saw that Loki had been busy.



The three gods ate their meat and fish and watched the sun go down.



When the gods awoke, they found themselves tied hand and foot with ropes and Finnish knots. Three angry men were standing over them, holding an otter skin.



The gods begged for mercy. They had no idea that Otter was a shapeshifter. They promised to pay whatever Hreidmar asked.



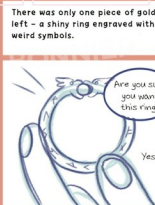
Loki volunteered to fetch the gold. Hreidmar let him go but he kept Odin and Honir as hostages.



Odin was wrong. Loki did return, carrying an enormous sack.



The magician watched with greedy eyes as Loki filled the otter's skin with gold and covered it over on top.

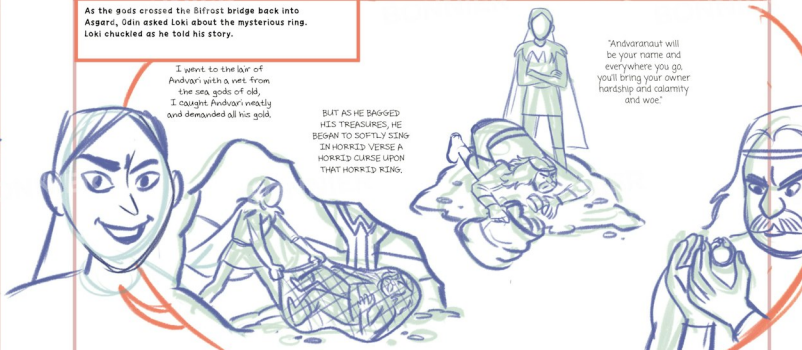


As the gods crossed the Bifrost bridge back into Asgard, Odin asked Loki about the mysterious ring. Loki chuckled as he told his story.

I went to the bar of Produr with a sack from the sea gods of old. I caught Produr's meaty and demanded all his gold.

BUT AS HE BAGGED HIS TREASURES, HE BEGAN TO SOFTLY SING IN HORRID VERSE A HORRID CURSE UPON THAT HORRID KING.

'Andvaranaut will be your name and everywhere you go you'll bring your own hardship and calamity and woe'



Odin and Honir gasped. As the owner of the enchanted ring, Hreidmar was now under a terrible curse.



Back at the waterfall, Faenir gazed at the barrow of gold, feverish with greed and envy. He wanted the treasure all to himself, so he lifted his sword and lopped off Hreidmar's head. The cursed ring had begun to work its terrible magic.



Fafnir hoarded his gold in a secret place and guarded it jealously. As the years passed, the evil in his heart corrupted his whole body.



The evil in Fafnir's heart deformed him into a worm - a monstrous dragon. He lived on Gnita Heath and terrorised all of Midgard. Everyone was afraid of him.



The WORM is coming!

Regin wanted nothing more than to kill Fafnir and take the gold for himself. The problem was, it would take the Greatest Hero of All Time to slay such a mighty dragon.



One day, Regin was in the marketplace when he overheard someone talking about a young prince called Sigurd.



Regin travelled to the court of King Alf and got a job as tutor to young Sigurd. He planned every lesson very carefully.



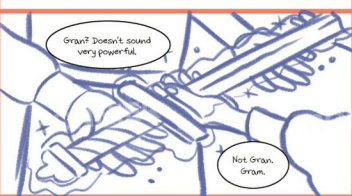
Every school day ended with an hour of sword-fighting practice. Sigurd used a wooden sword to learn the basics.



One afternoon, Sigurd thrust his sword so hard that it splintered into pieces. Regin forged for him a proper iron sword, but the young prince shattered that one, too - and the next!



Sigurd's mother gave Regin the pieces of a sword which had belonged to her first husband. The old swordsmith used the pieces to forge a glorious new sword called Gram.



Sigurd tried Gram out, with very impressive results.



Regin explained to Sigurd he would have to be very careful. One breath of fire from Fafnir's mouth would burn the young prince to a crisp, and one flick of that mighty tail would sweat him like a bug.



Early in the morning, Sigurd rode to Gnita Heath and calculated the dragon's route to and from the lake below.



The young prince dug a hole and lay in wait. His knees trembled like a newborn foal's and his knuckles were white on the hilt of his sword.

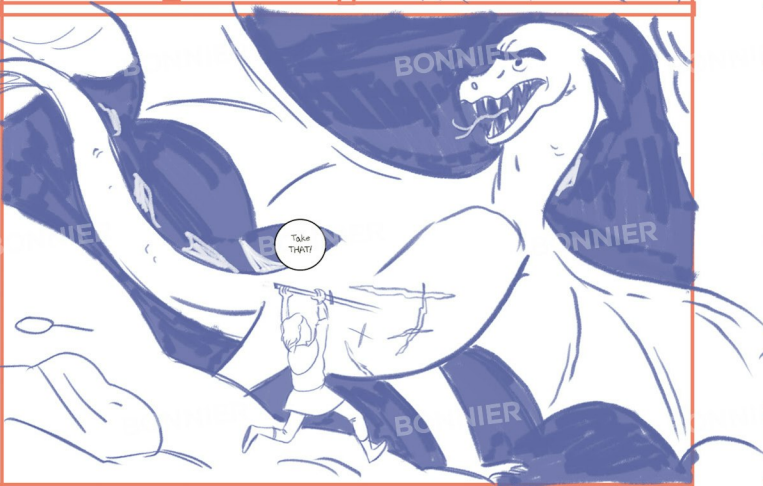


Not long now...

Along came wicked Fatir, heading down to the lake to drink. As the worm slithered over the hole, Sigurd looked up and saw its unprotected belly. In one explosive movement, the teenager thrust Gram upwards with all his strength.



YARDOOH!



Take THAT!

Old Regin was hiding behind a nearby bush, watching the dragon's death throes. Its thrashing tail felled mighty oaks and caused the ground to quake.



Typical Fatir. Always showing off.

When the dust settled, Regin shook his papa's hand and told him to roast Fatir's heart over a fire.



I want to eat it, see?

That sounds like perfectly normal behaviour.

Sigurd roasted the dragon's heart for Regin. After a few minutes, the boy tasted a tiny bit himself, just to see if it was ready. What happened next blew his socks off. He could suddenly hear the birds above his head talking to each other!



Flour Sigurd. He should be eating it himself!

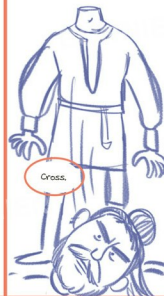
Whoever eats a dragon's heart gains all the knowledge in the world!

Sigurd realised with horror that his teacher had been planning to betray him all this time. Crafty old Regin did not come about his pupil becoming the Greatest Hero Of All Time. Regin had nothing on his mind but riches and revenge.



RRRRR!

Are you okay, Prince Sigurd? You look a bit...



Cross.

Sigurd ate the heart himself, then rode up to the dragon's lair. He stopped, spellbound. Even in the throne room of King Alf, he had never seen half as much gold as this!



Woah!

Sigurd grabbed all the gold he could. He filled both saddlebags and all his pockets.



Fill yer boots.

Oh yes, good idea!

When he was sure he could not carry any more gold, Sigurd left the cave and galloped off in search of more adventures.



Did you see that? He took the cursed ring!

Unlucky.

Sigurd did indeed become the Greatest Hero Of All Time, and he married a very beautiful and muscly woman called Brunhild.



SIGURD!

CAN YOU SHOW US YOUR SWORD?

Enough already!

CAN YOU SIGN MY TUNIC?

But even the Greatest Hero Of All Time could not escape the curse of the ring. Sigurd fell prey to Andvari's curse, just like Fatir and Hreidmar before him.



Sleep well, Dragon Slayer...

And what of Loki, who had also touched the ring? Did being a god make him invincible? We'll see...

