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2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404
612-872-5108
FAX 612-874-8119

Ragnarok

By
Charles Way

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Ragnarok

Part One-Peace.

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Part One- Peace

[The Great Hall of Gladsheim at Asgard citadel of the Gods. A victory feast is being held-around which the walls of Asgard lie in ruins]

Thor Drink-Drink- Drink to his name- no- to his many names. Resounding one. The Wise One-Spear Shaker-Father of the slain-Fullfiller of desires. All-Father. Father-ODIN!!

All OOOODIN.

Thor Drink, Drink,- to—to the excellence of his feast.

All To the feast!

Thor Let us praise-the OX.

All To the Ox!

Thor And- and- and the lamb – and the pig and the horse and the bear- and- and----

[Laughter]

Thor Wait- wait. Let's drink to the drink. I give you Gymir's Mead.

All To the mead. To Gymir.

Thor TO VICTORY!

All VICTORY!

Baldr Brothers-let us honour the most patient, most brave and beautiful mother who ever weaved a cloud.

[Loki, Thor and Baldr bow towards Frigga, their Mother and wife of Odin.]

Frigga When they behave well husband they belong to me. Otherwise they're yours-

Thor And now-Immortal ones- let's drink to-to-to The OX.

[Laughter at Thor and cries of 'Again'?]

Thor To those who butchered it. [Cheer] Cooked it. [Cheer] And served it. [Cheer]

Loki Let's drink to Thor-who ate most of it.

[Cheers and laughter. Odin rises to speak.]

Odin Gods of Asgard, raise your golden glasses, and drink to those

who sit as shadows now in Niflheim.

Drink to those who suffered, and remember the waste of war

The grief and pity of it, so this first war will also be named last.

Drink to your enemy, the brave Vanir-God's like us in form and favour

Who like us were never vanquished-nor victorious.

Oh- surely we fought for something? Yes, we fought for friendship

We fought for our families, and for life itself.

These things we had before, so drink God's to the foolishness of war.

Don't look so dismayed-we have won a truce.

A time without turmoil stretches before us.

But how can we be certain this truce will hold?

Because gifts have been exchanged, and the gift granted us

Is a victory that cannot be denied. The gift of Freya.

[This news sends a shiver of anticipation around the hall]

Where she walks children are born.

Where she looks- seeds fall.

What she touches blossoms and multiplies. Freya.

[Music. Enter Freya]

Odin Welcome Freya to Asgard, home of the Aesir. Be happy here- be fruitful.

We will honour and protect you as our own.

Freya Thank you, All-Father.

Odin My wife Frigga-foremost of women.

Frigga Welcome Freya. We've heard much about you. Your necklace is more beautiful than any description of it-as are you.

Freya I have heard that you, foremost of females, can read the fates of mortal men-but say nothing.

Frigga Where's there's nothing can be done, then a woman holds her tongue.

Odin My son Thor.

Thor We're honoured Freya. Forgive the state of our defences. Your warriors fought well. No doubt they wish they stood in Asgard now with you- who is--really good looking.

Frigga Forgive our son.

Freya Thank you first son of Odin, your words are as sweet as the mead that fuels them.

Odin Here is Baldr-the brightest and the best of us.

Thor The blondest.

Baldr My brother speaks boldly and truly- as he always does.

 The Vanir have suffered many loses,

 but the greatest grief of all to bear

 Must be the loss of you-so fair.

Thor I can do Rhyme.

Odin And Loki.

Freya Ah-the shape shifter.

[Loki stands with his wolf by his side on a leash. In his hand he carries a small snake. He bows slightly and the wolf and snake do likewise.]

 Which of these three creatures is you? Snake, wolf-boy?

Thor Ha.

Loki Most excellent lady. I hear you enjoy erotic poetry.

Freya And you do not?

Loki I am hampered by good taste. But your magic gifts I do admire and was wondering if-I might borrow soon your feather cloak?

[Freya turns her back on Loki]

 Welcome again.

Odin Gods of the Aesir raise your glasses

And drink to the peace promised here.

All To peace.

[A huge knocking at the door]

Odin Who knock's at Asgard's gate?

[The knock comes again]

Who beats at Odin's door?

[Baldr starts to go but Frigga summons him to stay. She leaves to discover who it might be.]

Thor Peace-of course we all want peace- but a hard truth remains-we are now defenceless. The Vanir were never our natural enemy-obviously. But those who have watched our walls reduced to rubble-are. I feel the breath of Giants on my neck.

Loki Perhaps you're a little bored brother and feel what you want to feel.

Thor Why do you speak across me? Last night you were in full agreement.

Loki As I am today-as Baldr is.

Odin Baldr?

Loki Has been having bad dreams again.

Baldr There is nothing new in them Father.

Loki No?

Odin Recount these dreams.

Baldr Today? The dream was as before—

Loki Broken battlements, crows on corpses- eternal winter- the usual stuff, but--

Odin Loki!

Baldr But through the mayhem and the mist came our distant brother, blind Hod. Stumbling-trying to find his way. That is all.

Odin Hod?

Loki I know, why Hod? We never see him.

Thor Who?

Loki Exactly.

[Frigga enters. She whispers to Odin who smiles and nods and then indicates to the others that they should retreat so that they cannot be seen but may hear what happens next. He takes Freya's arm –which is noted by Frigga-and her reaction is noted by Loki.]

Thor What's going on?

Loki A game brother-a party game. Hide!

[Frigga sits in the great hall as if alone. The door knocks again.]

Frigga Enter.

[Sound of a huge door creaking open. This sound is followed by the entrance of a little man pushing a wheelbarrow in which are some tools.]

Mason If I had a cap love, I'd doff it. [Looks about him] Had a bit of a do?

Frigga Do you realise where you are?

Mason Yes Mam, the fellow on the bridge-very professional.

Frigga Heimdall.

Mason That's him, made it all quite clear. Lovely bridge too. I appreciate beauty-craft. He said Mason, he said, the Gods will either slay you on the spot or welcome your proposition with open arms.

Frigga Mason?

Mason By name and nature. [He hands her his card] Professional job that too. If I could speak to the man himself.

Frigga I am the wife of the man himself. A proposition you say?

Mason Well-you need a mason- clearly.

Frigga Your arrival here is most opportune.

Mason Great lady-I am nothing if not opportune-by this merit a tradesman makes his way-see's what must be done and knocks on chances door. No job too small-or large in this case.

[Enter Thor, Loki, Odin, Freya]

Mason Ah-there you all are. And armed to the rafters-Doff, Doff, Doff. [He sees Freya] Ooh Doff.

Odin Mason. You can rebuild the walls of Asgard?

Mason I can.

Thor With one wheelbarrow?

Mason Certainly.

[The God's laugh]

Loki How long would it take you?

Mason Eighteen months.

Thor It would take you, little one, one hundred and eighteen months.

Mason No, no, no. I did my sums. One and a half years-that's my pledge- and if I don't do it in that time, pay me nothing, zilch.

Odin And what would your payment be?

Mason Ooooh. Looking at the state of the walls-and taking into account the full renewal of your security-which is not to be sniffed at-not these days-I would say the payment would be reasonable-reasonable. In return for this peace of mind- I would have the moon and- the sun. Yes-The sun and the moon. Did I say something?

Frigga You would leave us in darkness, both day and night?

Mason If the Giants were to attack-like now. What good would the sun and the moon be then? So-yes yes- I would have the sun and the moon- and you.

Freya Me?

Mason Where you walk children are born. I will have you for my wife. Shall I step outside while you discuss the matter?

Thor You think there's something to discuss- apart from your funeral arrangements?

Loki It really won't do brother- to start killing people at a party.

Thor Father?

Odin We will discuss your proposition.

[Exit Mason]

Thor Let me kill him Father-for lack of respect if nothing else.

Loki You said a moment ago that we are open to attack-that you feel the breath of Giants on your neck. To keep the peace therefore--we need the walls intact. Who among us can do this work?

Thor Can he?

Loki Can you? Let the Mason live Father.

Freya You want to marry me off --to a tradesman?

Loki There's a thought-might save us a lot of trouble.

Freya Will you let him speak to me like this! Is this how I am to be treated?

Frigga Don't worry Freya, Loki is the cleverest of us all.

Odin Speak Loki. Politely.

Loki We say yes to his plan-with no intention of paying him. Give him six months and see how he fares. He might complete most of it but when he fails in full his life will be forfeit—and Thor can do what Thor does best.

[Odin ponders for a moment then nods. Enter the mason.]

Odin The sun you shall have. The moon you shall have. Freya you shall—have, but only if the job is finished within six months.

Mason Oooh? Six? In this line of work the employer has the whip hand and no mistake.

Odin Do you accept these terms?

Mason If I may use my horse to help me.

Thor Let me rip out his heart-this stone hitter who dares bargain with Odin.

Loki Be calm-he asked for a horse. A single horse.

Odin Six months-or your life is mine.

Mason You won't regret it. {To Freya} Nor will you- great lady.

[Exit all but Frigga and Odin-who is lost in thought]

Frigga Baldr's dreams? What? I am his mother. He speaks to me.

Odin Why should Baldr- of all of us dream so darkly? And why of Hod?

Frigga Baldr misses him- and wants you to invite him home.

Odin My sons need no invitation. I won't be long away.

Frigga Thank you for the lie husband.

Odin I shall be swifter than light itself.

Frigga So you always say and there goes another year.

Odin I am the All-Father. How can I be called so if I don't know all things-?

[He puts on a wide brimmed hat and cloak.]

Frigga What-is that?

Odin A disguise.

Frigga Oh.

Odin People say to Odin what they think he wants to hear. What do you think?

Frigga ---It's excellent.

Odin Look after Freya.

Frigga Loki's right-she'll cause trouble.

Odin Ah-are you jealous?

Frigga Should I be?

Odin Of course-who can resist me?

[They embrace]

Part two-The Well and the Wall

[The Well of Fate]

Seeress Who's there? Who raises me up from my sorrows?

Odin I am Vetgam-the Wanderer.

Seeress Why have you come to the Well of Fate Vetgam?

Odin My mind wanders where my feet can't take me.

Seeress What would you know?

Odin I would know how the world began.

Seeress How it began Vetgam, is like your hat. Old. You can get such knowledge from any Skald with half a rhyme in him.

Odin And many are false. I would hear it from you alone, here at the Well of Fate, then I can be sure that you- and the Well are true.

Seeress Very nice that is. Very nice indeed coming from a hat and cloak like that. What have you got to pay for this old information, Vetgam?

[He pays her]

Seeress Dwarf gold. Dwarves-yes. I know how they began-as maggots in the flesh of Ymir. Now dwarves make gold- for Gods-----

[She goes to the Well and drops it in. Music and visions arise from The Well. She appears to go into a trance.]

Seeress Burning Ice, biting flame, that's how the world began.

Between ice and flame, Ginnungagap-a chasm of nothingness.

When ice met fire a droplet fell into the gap and from it rose

The first giant, who was called Ymir, forefather of all giants

Slain by Odin and his brothers Vili and Ve.

Odin From where did Odin himself arise?

Seeress From a block of ice- he was licked into shape by the cow Audumla.

Then stood Odin fully formed-slayer of Ymir, the giant.

From his body Odin made the world-shaping the earth from his flesh.
 Mountains he made from Ymir's bones. His blood became the sea-his skull the sky
 And under it Odin set four dwarves who's names are North South East and West.
 Then Odin seized sparks from the flames and called them Sun Moon and Stars
 And put them up in Ginnungagap to light heaven above, and earth below.
 So the All-Father fashioned a world fit for many kinds of being.
 Mortal men he placed in Midgard across a rainbow bridge.
 For the immortal ones he built a shining realm
 A mighty stronghold with gleaming walls
 And palaces that gaze over green plains-that is called Asgard.
 The End.

Odin The end?

Seeress You want more?

Odin What of the tree-called Yggdrasill?

[He pays more]

Seeress More gold then sense some people.

[She drops the gold in to the well.]

Over all creation grew a mighty ash-Yggdrasill.
 A tree without time that suffers and sustains life.
 Yggdrasill whose roots are here under Asgard
 And also under Jotunheim, land of the Giants
 And also in Niflheim, land of the dead.
 Yggdrasill, the dew dropper who gives life to life itself
 And will always be.

Odin Always?

Seeress You want more?

Odin Tell me how Odin's line will end.

Seeress Ah-'Vetgam'.

[She takes off his hat- and stares at him]

 Release me from this grave.

Odin Tell me.

Seeress Release me

Odin Never.

Seeress Then you must truly pay-as I have paid.

Odin What is the price?

Seeress Pain. Regret--- sorrow.

[She hands him an eye patch-he goes to take it.]

 Think 'Wise One'-fate cannot be undone.

Odin I am one whom knowledge will make wiser still.

Seeress Hmm. You'll be the first then.

[He takes the patch. The Seeress looks away as Odin rips out one of his eyes. He puts on the patch. The Seeress takes the eye to the well-and drops it in.]

Seeress Yggdrassil-the dew dropper who gives life to life itself.

 And will always be even unto Ragnarok-when all things will end.

Odin Ragnarok?

[Terrible sounds and visions assail Odin- building in scale and terror. He hears the hissing of snakes and the howling of wolves, the cries of agony as men and beasts die in battle. He sees a blind man- Hod wandering sightless through the mist as in Baldr's dream. He sees in his mind the end of all things- which climaxes in a huge volcanic eruption. He collapses in terror. Silence. When he wakes the Well of Fate and the Seeress have disappeared and he is back in Asgard.]

Frigga Husband?

[Odin still chased by nightmarish visions lashes out at her.]

Odin Who-who are you?

Frigga Your wife. Your patient wife.

[Odin looks about wildly]

And these your own halls. This is Asgard-home. Your eye?

Odin Baldr?

Frigga Baldr is here. What happened to---?

Odin Send for him, Thor and Loki too.

Frigga Thor is in Jotunheim. Don't worry, he'll get the best of any trouble he finds-or seeks.

Odin How long have I been absent?

Frigga Six months-almost.

Odin The wall?

Frigga Is near completion which is in itself a complication.

Odin But we are protected? We are-safe?

Frigga Yes, yes. What is it? What troubles you? What have you seen?

Odin I saw-the end of all things.

Frigga -----Ragnarok.

Odin Do not be afraid. I can forestall this end for all eternity now that I have seen it-now that I have paid. Frigga-most forbearing wife-there is something I must ask of you. An arduous task.

Frigga Ask.

Odin Go to each thing that lives in the world, and to each thing that has been made, to every beast, every plant and every spirit-and make each swear before you never to harm Baldr.

Frigga Baldr? Why?

Odin Tell each thing that swears that they will have Odin's love.

Frigga For that all things will swear. Your mind has suffered some assault- stay here with me and rest. Send Freya-she feels ill used and is idle here. She can reward each thing that swears with a kiss- and your world will multiply.

Odin I trust only you with this task. His mother.

[Exit Frigga. Odin is alone for a moment. Enter Baldr and Loki. Loki brings his wolf and his snake.]

Baldr Father?

Odin Ahh. [Odin embraces Baldr] Don't concern yourself-I see more with this one eye than all men mortal and immortal will ever see-or wish to.

Loki Painful though- and oddly disconcerting.

Odin Loki-most clever and mischievous of Gods.

Loki I try, I try. Welcome home Father. Regarding the walls-please hear the facts from me before----What?---What?

Odin I am Odin, begetter of the world-whatever has been made I can possess.

Loki Yes I- I don't follow.

Odin But I am loathe to take anything-I would prefer gifts.

Loki What can I give the All-Father that he does not already possess?

Odin The serpent that often plays about your fingers-that you call--?

Loki Jormungand.

Odin Now in your pocket. I will have it- for myself.

Loki ---Why?

Odin Baldr.

[Baldr takes the serpent.]

I thank you for this gift Loki. It honours you to obey Odin's whims.

Loki Father-the serpent is mine.

Odin I know. I understand. And your wolf- named Fenrir. I will have.

Loki Father-please—

Odin Pass him to Baldr.

Loki The wolf is mine. Mine.

Odin And being yours-makes the gift greater.

[Loki passes the wolf to Baldr]

Loki Why do you do this? Why do you humiliate me?

[Odin turns on Loki. A terrible sound emanates as if from him and Loki falls clutching his heart in agony.]

Odin I will do my best Loki to console you. Now console me. Give me a fair and honest report of our defences.

[Loki's pain now transfers to his throat]

Why don't you speak Loki? Speak. SPEAK.

Baldr Father?

[The spell is broken. Enter Freya]

Freya What can Loki say, except that he's failed. The mason's horse proved stronger than a thousand hodmen and each night pulls ten hundred weight of stone up to the wall, and each night the mason sings for he will have the sun, the moon and me.

Odin I am sure that Loki-who is loved by Odin will weave a scheme to save your skin-and his own.

Freya He cannot be trusted to succeed. What does he care for my honour?

Odin Freya will assist you Loki.

[Freya is about to object]

In this you will find some 'entertainment'.

[Freya exits. Loki exits.]

Odin Baldr, cast the serpent into the ocean that was drawn from Ymir's veins--so that she may not be found---take then the wolf Fenrir to a cave unknown and bind him there with chains unbreakable. If you need help go to your brother Tyr-not Hod. Ask me no questions but go-safely.

[Exit Baldr. Exit Odin]

[Enter Loki alone. Gathering his rage in he closes his eyes. Enter Freya-she watches him.]

Loki Sad serpent, bitten wolf.

 Why in the dark hills does he make you suffer-alone?

Freya So-Loki-save me.

Loki Save you?

Freya And yourself in doing so. Don't waste our time-nothing is more sacred to Loki than Loki.

Loki You don't like me?

Freya Truthfully I don't like anyone I wouldn't sleep with.

Loki I imagine that's a club with a very small membership.

Freya Ah it's you who doesn't like me.

Loki Truthfully-I tend to despise anyone who would sleep with me.

 [Freya laughs]

Freya Let us work together then--since we both need saving for another day.

Loki Another day will come.

Freya You have a plan?

Loki Now that I have you-my attractive assistant-yes. It's a tried and tested one.

Freya Ah--The oldest in the world.

Loki You shall play mare to the mason-for your honour.

Freya And you- shape shifter?

[Exit Loki. Freya hides as the mason enters. Behind him comes the horse Svadilfaeri who pulls a net of huge stones.]

Mason Oh my sweet burden beast, my tail swisher, my little grass muncher, tomorrow we will teach these Gods a lesson. Tomorrow Svadilfaeri we will stable in Utgard- and have our oats. Ha. Rest now in the meadow-sturdy stone shifter-rest-but always stay in sight of me. When you are strong again bring up the last five hundred weight of stone- and merry we shall be. Go. Go.

[The Stallion moves into the meadow to graze. The mason works and sings.]

'I like the way-she runs her fingers through my hair- and I like the way she—'

[Enter Freya]

Oh- lovely evening for a stroll.

Freya The last evening in Asgard. Tomorrow you will take the sun from our sky. There will be no evening, and no dawn to follow.

Mason I am sure, mighty Odin will find a way to light his halls. From Elves he could buy silver light and Dwarves I'm told will part with golden glim-if the reward be good enough. [He winks].

[Freya touches her necklace.]

Besides-a little darkness will do you God's no harm-no harm at all. It will take your minds off killing Giants.

Freya Giants? What do you know of them?

Mason Nothing, lady- nothing-though I have worked up there. The walls of Utgard need render too.

Freya You weren't afraid?

Mason Once I've finished this wall-the Gods will have no need to fear either hey?

Freya It will not concern me. It's clear you will set the last stone in time and I am honour bound to follow to your bed.

Mason Yesh. Yesh.

Freya And as passionate as I am –and I am- I am also practical. A woman should know the nature of her future husband.

Mason Yesh.

Freya Is it large? Your house?

Mason Very large- a little dark till now- but---I will hang the sun in my house to act as a lamp.

Freya To shed light upon our lovemaking?

Mason Yesh. But- Tomorrow lady-tomorrow. I still have a few rocks to lay before then.

Freya I confess Mason, I'm impressed by the sheer quantity and quality of your laying. So swift and yet so steady in your work, your natural rhythms measured to an art instinctive.

Mason Well I- wait-wait.

Freya What now?

Mason A grey mare. I swear I saw-a mare in the meadow.

Freya And what is this?

Mason Uh-Mortar.

Freya It's getting stiffer and stiffer by the second.

Mason That's the nature of the –of the-There you see another horse. Svadilfaeri. Come steady steed. Come by.

Freya It's hard to believe that you and a single stallion could achieve so much. It excites me Mason. Don't you see how excited I am?

Mason Yesh-I see. Svaldlifari. My sweet tail swisher-Come to me.

 [She kisses him and a kiss from Freya cannot be resisted. As they kiss-Svadlifaeri and Loki in the form of a grey mare run by and exit. The Mason pulls himself away.]

Mason Svadlifaeri! Come back-I beg you-Come back-my great stone shifter. What have you done?

Freya Nothing-what sensible creature prefers labour to love.

Mason You've deceived me.

Freya No-you deceived yourself. Did you really think the God's would let you take me? Mason.

Mason I have been deceived. I have been deceived.

 [The mason roars and mutates into a Giant. Enter Odin.]

Odin It appears that you are the deceiver. No Giant can set foot in Asgard and live.

 [The Giant roars.]

 Besides you've failed in your task. The wall is not complete-your life is forfeit.

Mason You won't find me so easy to kill-though you release a thousand warriors from Valhalla I have the strength of a thousand MORE.

Odin It is not I who will end your days -but Mjollnir-the hammer in the fist of Thor.

Mason Thor?

Odin Who returns now from Jotunheim, where doubtless he has slain some others of your race.

[The Giant roars- and then hears Thor's footsteps]

Does it fill your heart with dread-

[The footsteps get louder]

To hear his just and mighty tread?

[Enter Thor-who kills the giant.]

Freya Is the Mason dead?

Thor Mason?

Odin This was Kymir-giant of the rocks.

[Odin steps forward and cuts off his head.]

Odin On a spike his head will rise above my well built walls.

God's of Asgard-the race of giants will forever be our enemy

Even to the last blow of Heimdall's horn-at Ragnarok

This I have seen-until that day-we fight-we live-we love.

Be grateful now for the great one among us-who delays this fall.

Our walls are high once more and Freya has suffered no dishonour.

Praise and respect him.

Thor Father-to be your son and receive your smile-is all I need.

Odin Hail Loki. Hail Loki. Hail Loki.

[Enter a triumphant Loki-a long grey ponytail still hangs from his head.]

All Hail Loki.

[Exit all but Loki-who stares at the Giant's head. He slowly takes off his 'pony tail'- and gently touches the head of the Giant and bows his own .]

Part three-Innocence and Immortality.

Odin Come Loki, come with me. Take my hand. Please. We will travel together.

[Loki takes Odin's hand and the scene changes around them to Idun's orchard.]

Faster than thought we will fly.

And in some lovely place-with trees,

Feast on a wild ox that rolls above the roar

of a roasting flame and speak of things familiar.

[Idun's orchard is now in place, and an ox roasts. Gentle music]

Loki I'm not hungry.

Odin 'Anger may displace hunger for a time

But eventually the stomach overrules the mind.'

Loki I thought you'd won the mead of poetry-not drive!

[Silence]

Why have you brought me here? What do you want?

Odin To know you better---spend a little time-. You saved us Loki. You saved Freya- and in the most amusing way. I hope the stallion was not too forceful.

Loki Very funny.

Odin So- you shall be rewarded.

Loki With a barbecue? There is someone there-watching.

Odin Idun. This is her orchard. These her apples. Don't approach her Loki-she is-untroubled by the complexities—and simplicities of males.

Loki Pity. [He averts his gaze] This Ox is still raw. It's not even cooking.

Odin We must be patient then. Let's sit, drink and talk of immortality.

Loki What's to say -the subject is as endless as a yawn.

Odin All things will end Loki. All that I have made-But how? By what means?

Loki Well-Wise One-if you don't know then I surely don't. Until that day I am boringly 'immortal'.

Odin Unless you are slain-by some unnatural means.

Loki By whom?

[Silence-they stare at each other for some time- but this time Loki does not look away.]

Odin By a Giant perhaps.

Loki Ah! I can hear you plodding Father--towards your true subject. Or should I say 'step father'. You want me to be grateful again. I am. I am. I am.

Odin You are my son. I made you so and seek no gratitude.

[Silence]

Whatever I do Loki-you must remember, the Giants of Jotunheim will always and forever be our enemy.

Loki Saying makes it so, and so you say over and over, as if there has never been affection-or love between Gods and Giants. Even Thor has had his moments. Did Frey not love his Gerd. Did you not seduce the giantess Gunnlod- to obtain the mead of poetry. Was the getting so abhorrent? [Pause].

Odin What you say is true. There has often been affection-love- when a female of their race comes to us-but think Loki in reverse- if we had lost Freya to the Mason? The Giants lust for Freya-because they covet her potential. We would soon be outnumbered.

Loki And this-is what you fear?

Odin We must be ourselves Loki. We must not-become other than what we are-Gods. Not half God-half Giant-half-half- half until the world -my world is halved into nothingness. I will not let them have her-or any goddess of the Aesir.

[Silence]

Loki I wonder-Father-if there is so much to fear in this? The opinion --does not seem reflected in the rest of your creation, in which all things meet, mingle, merge --and change.

[Silence]

Odin I am pleased Loki. Of all my sons you are the one who can hold a conversation-without flattery-or fear.

Loki And-this is why we're here? To 'chat' next to this inedible ox?

Odin More than a son you shall be to me. You shall be my brother.

Loki --However that may be achieved-it will not please the 'sons of your desires'. They'll think me over recompensed- as I do. If you wish to reward me Father-return those whom you have banished and bound-without cause or explanation. Give them back.

[Odin stares one eyed at Loki-till even he must look away]

[Music enter Idun]

Odin Take an apple.

Loki I don't want an apple.

Odin Take one you annoying boy. It is these apples Loki that sit so easily at our daily feasts that hold back the crease of time, that deny the dewlap of old age. Here in these pips this core-this flesh is our fragile immortality.

[Loki looks at the apple with new understanding.]

This knowledge Loki is to be protected. My trust is your reward. Be gentle with it. Now-share an apple here with me and a bond between us shall be bound-which will buy us both- a little more time-to be bored in.

Loki Your riddles pass my understanding-but I am---grateful.

Odin Be still -become my brother.

[Loki and Odin holding an apple each, entwine arms and eat. They then embrace. Odin holds him close.]

Odin Now let's eat-some meat.

Loki I tell you it will not cook-there is some magic here prevents our meal.

Odin Then-I'll leave you to unravel it.

Loki Father? Our feast---

Odin Ah-my appetite is as fickle as the tide. Oh to have the hunger of youth again.

Loki Stay Father-please-we have come so far and- and I would like to know you more. You are always so busy.

Odin And my wife mourns my absence.

Loki Are you sure? I merely observe that Freya misses you as keenly.

Odin Mischief of that kind does not become a brother. Farewell Loki- enjoy your feast.

[Loki turns away to hear if someone approaches. The sound fades and when he turns back Odin has gone.]

Loki And there he was-gone.

Idun fair child- are you there? Come forward-my Gala girl. Russet cheeked and - Bramley bottomed.

[Silence. As he has been looking for Idun a scruffy looking eagle/ Thjazi has entered and stares at the Ox.]

Loki Ah-what do you want-mole muncher?

Thjazi I'm famished friend-I am truly. I could eat-well-an Ox.

Loki There's nothing for you here.

Thjazi Oh-don't say that. Don't tell me -it's an hallucination. No. Fellow traveller-after I am sated I promise that your Ox will cook quicker than an egg.

Loki So it was you who prevented my Father and I from sharing a meal together.

Thjazi Oh-was that your Father? I saw no family likeness.

Loki You bald bag of bones- I will cut your interfering ears off-

[He tries to catch the eagle but cannot]

Loki Who are you?

Thjazi A hungry bird-is all I am. Hunger honours no one. It warps the character. I humbly beg you to save me from its humiliations-before I'm forced to turn these beady eyes on living flesh.

Loki [Laughs] You think that I- a God of high renown- am to sit by and allow my liver to become-your lunch?

Thjazi I know-the experience would be humiliating for both of us.

Loki You do know who I am?

Thjazi Of course I do.-----Who are you?

Loki Go on then eat Odin's share-this I allow because you made me laugh at low point in my long existence. Then leave me in peace.

Thjazi You're a pal.

[The eagle approaches the Ox and devours it. In few moments there is nothing left but a skeleton. The eagle burps and the skeleton collapses in a clatter to the ground.]

Thjazi Oh. I didn't actually mean to do—that.

Loki You think you can poke fun at a God and get away with it? I am Loki and now you know, that I will kill you-[He gives chase and the bird flaps heavily away] pluck you skin you - stuff you. I will butcher baste and barbecue your miserable hide. I will use your talons for coat hooks, your feathers for cushions, your beak as a salt shaker and before any of that I will skewer you from beak to backside on that spit you----

[Loki is grabbed by huge talons from above and lifted into the air. As the talons clutch his shoulder blades he cries out in agony. He is soon above the trees.]

Thjazi Kill me. Eat me?

Loki Your claws-your claws.

Thjazi Dig deep.

Loki Agh. In the name of Odin-who are you? The trees-watch the trees. Ow-Ow-Ow-Ow . What are you trying to do-kill me? Shred me?

Thjazi I thought you-Loki-could not be killed.

Loki Well think again-what are you doing?

Thjazi We should put your flesh to the test.

[A smoking volcano now appears beneath Loki.]

Loki No no no no no. Just put me down-not there not there. My feet. My feet.

Thjazi I will boil poach, and steam the skin from your heels.

[Loki's feet burn]

Loki Wait-wait. What wrong have I done you? Did I refuse you food? And those things I said-I didn't mean. I never mean half the things I say. Everyone who knows me-knows this. I am Loki-full of fun and- and Agh. If I spoke harshly I spoke from hunger-you know what a humiliating condition that can be. Show me Mercy.

Thjazi Like the mercy shown to Kymir.

Loki Who?

Thaizi The Mason of Asgard-who wanders headless now in Niflheim.

Loki But that was a thousand years ago.

Thjazi I have a long memory.

[Loki descends again to the volcano's heat and cries out.]

Loki Who are you truly and what can I give you to save me from this cookery?

Thjazi What is the secret of Idun's apples? Why does Odin himself-eat of them?

Loki I-have no idea- Ahh. I cannot tell you –I cannot.

[Loki descends again to the Volcano's heat]

Loki Father forgive me.

Thajzi Tell me.

Loki The apples- are the apples of our continual youth.

[Loki descends again to the volcano's heat.]

Loki I told you –you—[He cries out]

Thajzi Bring Idun and her apples out of Asgard. Bring her to me-across the Bifrost bridge into the forest beyond Midgard. There I shall meet you-face to face.

Loki Alright. Yes. Yes.

Thjazi Swear it- on Odin's name.

Loki I swear on Odin's name-to bring Idun out of Asgard.

[The eagle drops Loki into the Orchard. Exit Eagle. Idun watches Loki. Her main means of communication is to either shake or nod her head-like a child.]

Idun You're badly wounded.

Loki Scratched, steamed, scalded. All because some eagle mistook me for a mouse.

Idun I didn't see an eagle-or a mouse. I saw the All-Father. I saw you. Loki.

Loki Ah-you've heard of me? People say many things about Loki. Not all true.

Idun What people say doesn't concern me.

Loki What does concern you Idun?

Idun This orchard-these apples.

Loki You've never been anywhere else? Never crossed the Bifrost bridge –for example? You're not curious? Oh Idun- when I was in the Eagle's clasp I saw the wonder of Odin's world. The raw beauty of all that is. The walls of Asgard gleaming in the sun. The halls of Gladsheim where we feast and have more fun than is strictly necessary. Wouldn't you like to join your family there and sit with Odin at his table? See the vaulted rooftops of Valhalla? Hear the soldiers sing their plangent melodies? To the east I glimpsed Alfheim, land of the Light Elves and beyond their misty realm the mountains of Jotunheim -so vast the imagination cowers. To the west I saw Nidavelli glowing in the dark-the dwarf domain -where Brisinga men forged the golden necklace that burns beneath the face of Freya-as if in competition with her beauty-which is matchless. Come - she would like to meet you? She likes women too. No? The eagle bore me higher still-so high that I could see-the tree Yggdrasill-that binds all things together. We could place our hands upon the sacred bark and feel existence shudder. Well then Loki-is lost for words-for Loki loves the world. Oh-though as we returned I saw an orchard beyond the Bifrost bridge.

Idun An orchard?

Loki But it will be off no interest to you-who has no interest in anything.

Idun What kind of orchard?

Loki Like this-but with more trees perhaps.

Idun Like this? It isn't possible.

Loki How would you know-who have seen nothing beyond these leaves? In the middle of this wood-in a glade greener than this stood a silver apple tree and from its boughs I saw sweet apples hanging. Lots of them.

Idun I have apples here.

Loki Yes –but these apples Idun were golden and-- delicious. The eagle told me they have a special quality. Your apples-slow down the curse of time-so that time itself becomes quite meaningless-but the apples over there- are the apples of –of- of-time reversal. Yes. They not only hold time up-they reverse it-you see. Odin himself would become-a young man again. Nothing would make the All Father happier than recovering his youthful appetites. He told me so.

Idun You wouldn't lie to me?

Loki I never learnt the art.

Idun Show me.

[Loki extends his arm and as Idun grasps it the scene around them shifts. The orchard trees fade and darkness falls.]

Idun What place is this?

Loki The place I spoke of.

Idun Where is the tree with the golden apples?

Loki Strange-I- I can't see it now.

Idun Loki-what is that sound?

[She hears the footsteps of the Giant Thjazi approaching-louder and louder. Enter Thjazi- now in his own form. Idun cowers by Loki]

Thjazi Good evening-welcome to the woods.

Idun Loki? Who is this?

Thaizi An eagle.

[Thjazi laughs and the wind picks up and Loki and Idun have difficulty standing.]

Loki His name is Thjazi-a storm Giant.

Idun Where are the apples you promised me?

Loki Go with Thjazi-he will show you the apples.

Idun What have you done?

Loki Go with Thjazi. He will not harm you.

[The Giant takes her]

Idun No . No. No. No. LOKI!

[Screaming with fear she is taken away.]

ASGARD

[Enter Freya with a mirror, Thor and Baldr.]

Freya My face-my face-

Baldr My hair?

Thor My grip-

Freya My eyes

Thor I can barely lift the hammer.

Freya Odin. Odin?

Odin What's all this shouting and door slamming? Where am I?

Freya All father look-look.

Odin What is that old woman doing here?

Freya Ah.

Thor I have no strength. It flows from me -as lava flows from the-- and I'm -I'm weak. And you Baldr-are grey. I mean really -and thin on top.

Odin Baldr? Is that you?

Baldr Yes Father.

Odin What's happening? I can't seem to follow the—the path-my mind-my mind-

Baldr We're growing old Father. Strength fails, looks fade, minds wander.

Freya My looks.

Thor My strength.

Odin We must eat of Idun's apples before we grow more feeble still

Freya Apples?

Odin Before I lose forever my—my-

Baldr Memory.

Freya Where are these apples? I want an apple.

Odin Bring Idun into Gladsheim. Do it now-while you have time. Why do exchange secret looks?

Baldr Father. Heimdall saw Idun cross the Bifrost-into Midgard.

Odin Why didn't he stop her?

Thor Because she wasn't alone.

Odin --Loki.

All Loki.

ODIN LOKI !

[Enter Loki. He holds one of Idun's apples]

Loki You called? Dear me- a mottled crew.

Freya Give me that apple-give it. Give it.

Loki My—it appears the falcon has crow's feet.

Thor What have you done this time? Answer me!

[He tries to lift the hammer]

Loki Or what? This 'brother' is how mortal men are every day-such weakness demands more courage than you will ever possess.

Thor Agh—

Odin Baldr- who is that fellow?

Baldr That is Loki. You called for him.

Odin What is he to me?

Baldr Your adopted son.

Loki Oh more than that-his brother- bound in trust till the end of time.

Thor Liar.

Loki It's true—and quite fair I think.

Baldr Loki-Where is the innocent Idun?

Loki Oh -Baldr-the balder. Still the being the best?

Freya Answer him-where is Idun? What have you done?

Loki I kept a pledge that's all.

Thor To whom?

Loki A giant.

Thor A giant?

Loki I had no choice.

Thor A giant?

Loki Yes-A giant. Put your hearing aid in. Don't worry. I know where Idun is-I just haven't worked out a way of getting her back.

Bladr What name?

Loki Thjazi.

Thor The storm giant?

Loki Oh does that make you more jealous -has he stolen your thunder?

Freya You're a monster.

Loki From here dear-so are you.

Odin What's going on? What are all you –people gossiping about? Why am I- What? I can't seem –I can't--

Baldr Brother Loki-this game is played out. Give me the apple.

 [Baldr takes the apple and gives it to Odin who eats. His wits return immediately]

Odin Loki-you have put us in danger.

Thor Again.

Odin Speak to us.

Loki I regret Father- of course-this elderly episode. Though perhaps some good may come of it-these Gods- having been older will presumably be wiser.

 [Odin stands and a terrible noise fills the Hall. Loki falls in agony.]

Odin You dare mock your own family? Are we here for your amusement? I will turn your ribcage inside out and feed your beating heart to hawks.

Baldr Father-cause Loki no more harm. He didn't realise the consequences of his actions-I am sure.

Freya I am not.

Thor Is it true father? You raised Loki up-to be your brother?

Odin Am I to regret my faith in you-Loki?

Loki I will bring Idun and her apples home.

Odin How will you do this?

Loki Freya. Give me you feather coat.

Freya Never.

Loki And I will fly fast to Jotunheim and bring Idun home. When Thjazi sees me he will take the shape of an eagle and give chase. I will lead him here.

Odin Give him your cloak.

 [She gives him the cloak. Then each take a bite of the apple.]