

Thor's Hammer



Thor and his wife, Sif, lived in Asgard in the land of the gods and goddesses. Sif had long, golden hair that was the envy of all the other goddesses. One night, when Thor was away, the mischievous Loki entered Sif's room. He chopped off Sif's beautiful tresses while she slept. But Thor found out that the culprit was Loki. He threatened to destroy Loki if Sif's hair was not replaced.

Loki visited the caves of the elves who made treasures from underground metals. Loki pleaded with them to construct a head of golden hair for Sif. The elves made the hair and created other gifts to please the gods. They designed a magic ship that could hold all the Norse gods and goddesses. When the ship wasn't in use, it shrank to the size of a hand-held toy. They also forged a sword made from precious metals.

But Loki thought that it would require still more treasures to win the favor of Thor and the other gods and goddesses. He visited the elves and challenged them to make gifts finer than the boat and the sword. He foolishly promised to give the elves his head if they could make better gifts.

The elves made a glittering gold boar, a golden armband, and a jewel-handled hammer called Mjollnir. The sly Loki escaped with the treasures before the elves could cut off his head.

When Loki returned to Asgard, he gave the hammer to Thor, the hair to Sif, and the rest of the treasures to Odin and Frey. The angry elves followed Loki and demanded that the gods judge their work.

Loki argued that the boar was not as practical as a magic ship, and the handle of the hammer was not as perfect as the elves claimed. Odin and the others ruled in favor of the elves. Loki owed them his head.

"You can't take my head without taking part of my neck," Loki argued. "My neck is not part of the bargain." The elves studied Loki's neck and head. They reluctantly agreed that Loki was right. However, the elves claimed, they did own Loki's head and could do what they wished with it. To punish him, they sewed his mouth shut. It was a long time before Loki could undo the stitches and get into trouble again.

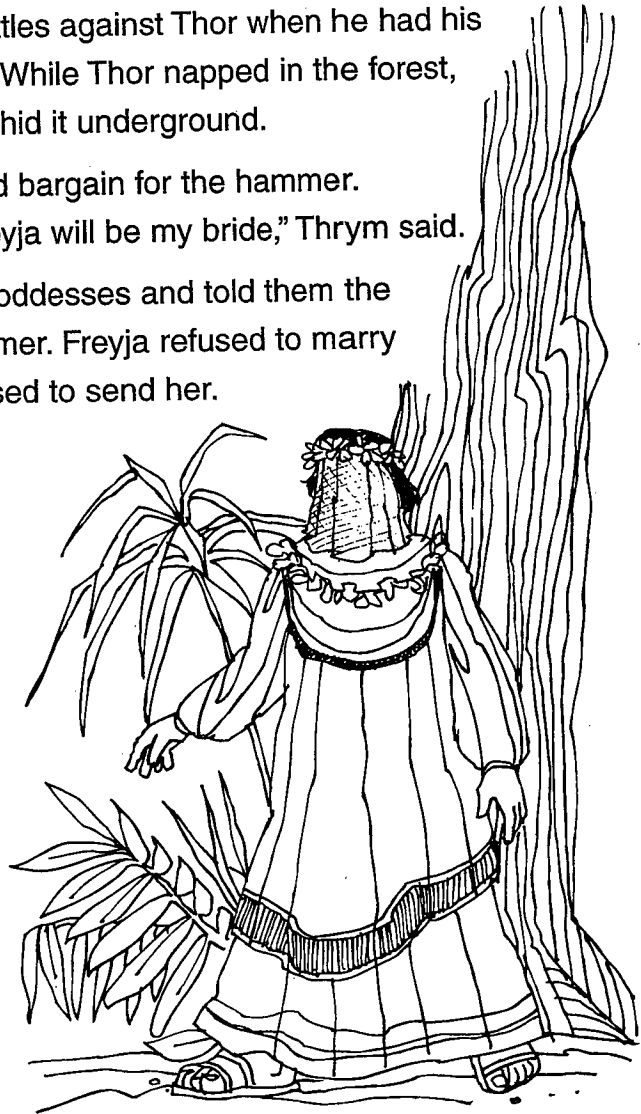
Thor put his new hammer to good use. He created lightning when he threw it to Earth, and used it to protect the gods from giants.

Since the giants couldn't win battles against Thor when he had his hammer, they decided to steal Mjollnir. While Thor napped in the forest, the giant Thrym stole the hammer and hid it underground.

Thor sent Loki to see Thrym and bargain for the hammer. "I will return Mjollnir if the goddess Freyja will be my bride," Thrym said.

Loki returned to the gods and goddesses and told them the ransom Thrym demanded for the hammer. Freyja refused to marry Thrym. Loki argued, but the gods refused to send her.

"I have another plan," Loki said. "We'll dress Thor as a bride. When Thrym gives us the hammer, Thor can destroy him with it."



When Thor realized there was no other way to get his mighty hammer back, he reluctantly agreed to wear a bride's veil and dress. Disguised as Freyja, Thor journeyed with Loki to the Land of the Giants. Thrym greeted them when they arrived at his cave.

"She is as beautiful as any goddess, I'm sure," praised Thrym, "but I had no idea she was this tall. Her boots are bigger than mine!"

"It was a long walk," Loki explained. "She wore large boots in case her feet swelled. Since you are a giant, and quite tall yourself, her size is not important."

Thrym agreed. He set out a wedding feast for the guests. Thor ate a whole ox, a basket of salmon, and washed his food down with huge bowls of mead.

"She has a giant appetite," Thrym said.

"It's a custom with goddesses," Loki explained. "The bride doesn't eat for days before her wedding. She's very hungry after such a long fast."

"I must have just one look at my bride's face," Thrym said. He lifted the veil and jumped up from the bench, almost knocking over Thor and Loki. "Those eyes! They're as red as fire."

"It's nothing," Loki said. "She hasn't slept for a week just thinking about her husband-to-be. If you give me Mjollnir, the wedding can begin."

Thrym left the room and brought back the hammer.

"Let the bride hold it for good luck," Loki said. Thrym handed the hammer to Thor.

Thor tore off the veil and struck the giant with Mjollnir. Loki and Thor fled just as the other giants arrived for the wedding. Loki turned himself into a hawk and flew away, leaving Thor and Mjollnir to fight the wedding guests. Thor felled the giants, one by one, and hurried back to Asgard to tell his tale.

