***THOR****God of Thunder*

Thor, or Donar, is the son of Odin and by some accounts Jörd (Erda or Earth), while others state that his mother was Frigga, Queen of the Gods. Thor is is known as "The Thunderer", Hammer-God of thunder and lightening, agriculture and craftsmanship. He is the archetype hero/warrior and friend of the common folk. His divine hammer is known as Mjöllnir (the crusher), forged by the Dwarves as remuneration for a crime committed by Loki. He is champion of the Gods and enemy of the Giants and Trolls; protector of Midgard and the common man from the forces of chaos. He dons a magic belt called Megingjardar, which when worn doubles his already miraculous strenght, and drives a chariot pulled by two Giant male goats.

As a child Thor was very remarkable for his great size and strength, and very soon after his birth amazed the assembled gods by playfully lifting and throwing about ten loads of bear skins. Although generally good tempered, Thor occasionally flew into a terrible rage, and as he was very dangerous under these circumstances. His mother, unable to control him, sent him away from home and intrusted him to the care of Vingnir (the winged), and of Hlora (heat). These foster parents, who are also considered as the personification of sheet lightning, soon managed to control their troublesome charge, and brought him up so wisely, that all the gods were duly grateful for their kind offices. Thor himself, recognizing all he owed them, assumed the names of Vingthor and Hlorridi, by which he is also known.

*“Cry on, Vingi-Thor,
With the dancing of the ring-mail and the smitten shields of war.”
              -SIGURD THE VOLSUNG (William Morris)*

Having attained his full growth and the age of reason, Thor was admitted in Asgard among the other gods, where he occupied one of the twelve seats in the great judgment hall. He was also given the realm of Thrud-vang or Thrud-heim, where he built a wonderful palace called Bilskirnir (lightning), the most spacious in all Asgard. It contains five hundred and forty halls for the accommodation of the thralls, who after death are welcomed to his home, where they are treated as well as their masters in Valhalla, for Thor is the patron god of the peasants and lower classes.

*“Five hundred halls
And forty more,
Methinketh, hath
Bowed Bilskirnir.
Of houses roofed
There’s none I know
My son’s surpassing.”
              -SÆMUND’S EDDA (Percy’s tr.)*

As he is the God of Thunder, Thor alone is never allowed to pass over the wonderful bridge Bifröst, lest he should set it aflame by the heat of his presence; and when he daily wishes to join his fellow gods by the Urdar fountain, under the shade of the sacred tree Yggdrasil, he is forced to make his way thither on foot, wading through the rivers Kormt and Ormt, and the two streams Kerlaug, to the trysting place.

Thor, who was honored as the highest god in Norway, came second in the trilogy of all the other countries, and was called “old Thor,” because he is supposed by some mythologists to have belonged to an older dynasty of gods, and not on account of his actual age, for he was represented and described as a man in his prime, tall and well formed, with muscular limbs and bristling red hair and beard, from which, in moments of anger, the sparks fairly flew.

*“First, Thor with the bent brow,
In red beard muttering low,
Darting fierce lightnings from eyeballs that glow,
Comes, while each chariot wheel
Echoes in thunder peal,
As his dread hammer shock
Makes Earth and Heaven rock,
Clouds rifting above, while Earth quakes below.”
              -VALHALLA (J. C. Jones)*

The Northern races further adorned him with a crown, on each point of which was either a, glittering star, or a steadily burning flame, so that his head was ever surrounded by a kind of halo of fire, his own element.

**Thor’s Hammer**

Thor is the proud possessor of a magic hammer called Mjöllnir (the crusher) which he hurls at his enemies, the frost giants, with destructive power, and which possesses the wonderful property of always returning to his hand, however far away he might hurl it.

*“I am the Thunderer!
Here in my Northland,
My fastness and fortress,
Reign I forever!*

*“Here amid icebergs
Rule I the nations;
This is my hammer,
Mjöllnir the mighty;
Giants and sorcerers
Cannot withstand it!”
              -SAGA OF KING OLAF (Longfellow*)

As this huge hammer, the emblem of the thunderbolts, is generally red hot, Thor has an iron gauntlet called Iarn-greiper, which enables him to grasp it firmly and hurl it very far, his strength, which was already remarkable, being always doubled when he wears his magic belt called Megingjardar.

*“This is my girdle:
Whenever I brace it,
Strength is redoubled!”
              -SAGA OF KING OLAF (Longfellow)*

Thor’s hammer was considered so very sacred by the ancient Northern people, that they were wont to make the sign of the hammer, as the Christians later taught them to make the sign of the cross, to ward off all evil influences, and to secure many blessings. The same sign was also made over the newly born infant when water was poured over its head and a name given it. The hammer was used to drive in boundary stakes, which it was considered sacrilegious to remove, to hallow the threshold of a new house, to solemnize a marriage, and, lastly, to consecrate the funeral pyre upon which the bodies of heroes were burned, together with their weapons and steeds, and, in some cases, with their wives and dependents.

In Sweden, Thor, like Odin, was supposed to wear a broad-brimmed hat, and hence the storm clouds in that country are known as Thor’s hat, a name also given to one of the principal mountains in Norway. The rumble and roar of the thunder were called the roll of his chariot, for he alone among the gods never rode on horseback, but walked, or drove in a brazen chariot drawn by two goats, Tanngniostr (tooth cracker), and Tanngrisnr (tooth gnasher), from whose teeth and hoofs the sparks constantly flew

*“Thou tamest near the next, O warrior Thor!
Shouldering thy hammer, in thy chariot drawn,
Swaying the long-hair’d goats with silver’d rein.”
              -BALDER DEAD (Matthew Arnold)*

When the God thus drove about from place to place, he was called Aku-thor, or Thor the charioteer, and in southern Germany the people, fancying a brazen chariot alone inadequate to furnish all the noise they heard, declared it was loaded with copper kettles, which rattled and clashed, and therefore often called him, with disrespectful familiarity, the kettle vender.

**Thor’s Family**

Thor is twice married; first to the giantess Iarnsaxa (iron stone), who bore him two sons, Magni (strength) and Modi (courage), both destined to survive their father and the twilight of the gods, and rule over the new world which is to rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the first. His second wife is Sif, the golden-haired, who also bore him two children, Lorride, and a daughter named Thrud, a young giantess renowned for her size and strength. By the well-known affinity of contrast, Thrud was wooed by the dwarf Alvis, whom she rather favored; and one evening, when this suitor, who, being a dwarf, could not face the light of day, presented himself in Asgard to sue for her hand, the assembled Gods did not refuse their consent. They had scarcely signified their approbation, however, when Thor, who had been absent, suddenly appeared, and casting a glance of contempt upon the puny lover, declared he would have to prove that his knowledge atoned for his small stature, before he could win his bride.

To test Alvis’s mental powers, Thor then questioned him in the language of the Gods, Vanas, elves, and dwarfs, artfully prolonging his examination until sunrise, when. the first beam of light, falling upon the unhappy dwarf, petrified him. There he stood, an enduring example of the Gods’ power, and served as a warning to all other dwarfs who would fain have tested it.

*“Ne’er in human bosom
Have I found so many
Words of the old time.
Thee with subtlest cunning
Have I yet befooled.
Above ground standeth thou, dwarf,
By day art overtaken,
Bright sunshine fills the hall.”
              -SÆMUND’S EDDA (Howitt’s version)*

**Sif, the Golden-haired**

Sif, Thor’s wife, was very vain of a magnificent head of long golden hair which covered her from head to foot like a brilliant veil; and as she too is a symbol of the earth, her hair is said to represent the long grass, or the golden grain covering the Northern harvest fields. Thor was very proud of his wife’s beautiful hair; imagine his dismay, therefore, upon waking one morning, to find her all shorn, and as bald and denuded of ornament as the earth when the grain has all been garnered, and nothing but the stubble remains! In his anger, Thor sprang to his feet, vowing he would punish the perpetrator of this outrage, whom he immediately and rightly conjectured to be Loki, the arch plotter, ever on the lookout for some evil deed to perform. Seizing his hammer, Thor soon overtook Loki in spite of his attempting to evade him by changing form, caught him by the throat, and almost strangled him ere he yielded to his imploring signs, and slightly loosed his powerful grasp. As soon as Loki could catch his breath, he implored forgiveness, but all his entreaties were vain, until he promised to procure for Sif a new head of hair, as beautiful as the first, and as luxuriant in growth.

*“And thence for Sif new tresses I’ll bring Of gold, ere the daylight’s gone,
So that she shall liken a field in spring,
With its yellow-flowered garment on.”
              -THE DWARFS, OEHLENSCHLÄGER (Pigott’s tr.)*

Thor, hearing this, consented to let the traitor go; so Loki rapidly crept down into the bowels of the earth, where Svartalfheim was situated, to beg the dwarf Dvalin to fashion not only the precious hair, but a present for Odin and Frey, whose anger he wished to disarm.

The dwarf soon made the spear Gungnir, which never failed in its aim, and the ship Skidbladnir, which, always wafted by favorable winds, could sail through the air as well as on the water, and was so elastic, that although it could contain the Gods and all their steeds, it could be folded up into the very smallest compass and thrust in one’s pocket. Lastly, he spun the very finest golden thread, from which he fashioned the required hair for Sif, declaring that as soon as it touched her head it would grow fast there and become alive.

*“Though they now seem dead, let them touch but her head,
Each hair shall the life-moisture fill;
Nor shall malice nor spell henceforward prevail
Sif’s tresses to work aught of ill.”
              -THE DWARFS, OEHLENSCHLÄGER (Pigott’s tr.)*

Loki was so pleased with these proofs of the dwarfs’ skill that he declared the son of Ivald was the most clever of smiths — words which were overheard by Brock, another dwarf, who exclaimed that he was sure his brother Sindri could produce three objects which would surpass those which Loki held, not only in intrinsic value, but also in magical properties. Loki immediately challenged the dwarf to show his skill, wagering his head against Brock’s on the result of the undertaking.

Sindri, apprised of the wager, accepted Brock’s offer to blow the bellows, warning him, however, that he must work persistently if he wished to succeed; then he threw some gold in the fire, and went out to bespeak the favor of the hidden powers. During his absence Brock diligently plied the bellows, while Loki, hoping to make him fail, changed himself into a gadfly and cruelly stung his hand. In spite of the pain, the dwarf did not let go, and when Sindri returned, he drew out of the fire an enormous wild boar, called Gullin-bursti, on account of its golden bristles, which had the power of radiating light as he flitted across the sky, for he could travel through the air with marvelous velocity.

*“And now, strange to tell, from the roaring fire
Came the golden-haired Gullinbörst,
To serve as a charger the sun-god Frey,
Sure, of all wild boars this the first.”
              -THE DWARFS, OEHLENSCHLÄGER (Pigott’s tr.)*

This first piece of work successfully completed, Sindri flung some more gold on the fire and bade his brother blow, ere he again went out to secure magic assistance. This time Loki, still disguised as a gadfly, stung the dwarf on his cheek; but in spite of the pain Brock worked on, and when Sindri returned, he triumphantly drew out of the flames the magic ring Draupnir, the emblem of fertility, from which eight similar rings dropped every ninth night.

*“They worked it and turned it with wondrous skill,
Till they gave it the virtue rare,
That each thrice third night from its rim there fell
Eight rings, as their parent fair.”
              -THE DWARFS, OEHLENSCHLÄGER (Pigott’s tr.)*

Now a lump of iron was cast in the flames, and with a new caution not to forfeit their success by inattention, Sindri passed out, leaving Brock to ply the bellows and wrestle with the gadfly, which this time stung him above the eye until the blood began to flow in such a stream, that it prevented his seeing what he was doing. Hastily raising his hand for a second, Brock dashed aside the stream of blood; but short as was the interruption, Sindri uttered an exclamation of disappointment when he drew his work out of the fire, for the hammer he had fashioned had too short a handle.

*“Then the dwarf raised his hand to his brow for the smart,
Ere the iron well out was beat,
And they found that the haft by an inch was too short,
But to alter it then ‘twas too late.”
              -THE DWARFS, OEHLENSCHLÄGER (Pigott’s tr.)*

Notwithstanding this mishap, Brock was so sure of winning the wager that he did not hesitate to present himself before the Gods in Asgard, gave Odin the ring Draupnir, Frey the boar Gullin-bursti, and Thor the hammer Mjöllnir, whose power none could resist.

Loki immediately gave the spear Gungnir to Odin, the ship Skidbladnir to Frey, and the golden hair to Thor; but although the latter immediately grew upon Sif’s head and was unanimously declared more beautiful than her own locks had ever been, the gods decreed that Brock had won the wager, for the hammer Mjöllnir, in Thor’s hands, would prove invaluable against the frost giants on the last day.

*“And at their head came Thor, Shouldering his hammer, which the giants know.”
              -BALDER DEAD (Matthew Arnold)*

Wishing to save his head, Loki fled, but was soon overtaken by Thor, who brought him back and handed him over to Brock, telling him, however, that although Loki’s head was rightfully his, he must not touch his neck. Thus hindered from obtaining full vengeance, the dwarf tried to sew Loki’s lips together, but, as his sword would not pierce them, he was obliged to borrow his brother’s awl. However, Loki, after enduring the Gods’ gibes in silence for a little while, managed to cut the string and was soon as loquacious as ever.

In spite of his redoubtable hammer, Thor was never considered as the injurious God of the storm, who destroyed peaceful homesteads and ruined the harvest by sudden hail storms and cloud bursts, for the Northerners fancied he hurled it only against ice giants and rocky walls, reducing the latter to powder to fertilize the earth and make it yield plentiful fruit to the tillers of the soil.

In Germany, where the eastern storms are always cold and blighting, while the western bring warm rains and mild weather, Thor was supposed to journey always from west to east, to wage war against the evil spirits which would fain have enveloped the country in impenetrable veils of mist and have bound it in icy fetters.

**Journey to Jötunheim**

As the giants from Jötunheim were continually sending out cold blasts of wind to nip the tender buds and hinder the growth of the flowers, Thor once made up his mind to go and force them to better behavior. Accompanied by Loki he therefore set out in his chariot. After riding for a whole day the gods came at nightfall to the confines of the giant-world, where, seeing a peasant’s hut, they resolved to spend the night and refresh themselves.

Their host was hospitable but very poor, and Thor seeing that he would scarcely be able to supply the necessary food to satisfy his by no means small appetite, slew both his goats, which he cooked and began to eat, inviting his host and family to partake freely of the food thus provided, but cautioning them to throw all the bones, without breaking them, into the skins spread out on the floor.
The peasant and his family ate heartily, but a youth called Thialfi, encouraged by Loki, ventured to break one of the bones and suck out the marrow, thinking his disobedience would never be detected. On the morrow, however, Thor, ready to depart, struck the goat skins with his hammer Miölnir, and immediately the goats sprang up as lively as before, except that one seemed somewhat lame. Perceiving in a second that his commands had been disregarded, Thor would have slain the whole family in his wrath. The culprit acknowledged his fault, however, and the peasant offered to compensate for the loss by giving the irate god not only his son Thialfi, but also his daughter Roskva, to serve him forever.

Charging the man to take good care of the goats, which he left there until he should return, and bidding the young peasants accompany him, Thor now set out on foot with Loki, and after walking all day found himself at nightfall in a bleak and barren country, which was enveloped in an almost impenetrable gray mist. After seeking for some time, Thor saw through the fog the uncertain outline of what looked like a peculiar-shaped house. Its open portal was so wide and high that it seemed to take up all one side of the house. Entering and finding neither fire nor light, Thor and his companions flung themselves wearily down on the floor to sleep, but were soon disturbed by a peculiar noise, and a prolonged trembling of the ground beneath them. Fearing lest the main roof should fall during this earthquake, Thor and his companions took refuge in a wing of the building, where they soon fell sound asleep. At dawn, the God and his companions passed out, but they had not gone very far ere they saw the recumbent form of a sleeping giant, and perceived that the peculiar sounds which had disturbed their rest were produced by his snores. At that moment the giant awoke, arose, stretched himself, looked about him for his missing property, and a second later he picked up the object which Thor and his companions had mistaken in the darkness for a house. They then perceived with amazement that the wing in which they had all slept was the separate place in a mitten for the giant’s great thumb! Learning that Thor and his companions were on their way to Utgard, as the giants’ realm was also called, Skrymir, the giant, proposed to be their guide; and after walking with them all day, he offered them the provisions in his wallet ere he dropped asleep. But, in spite of strenuous efforts, neither Thor nor his companions could unfasten the knots which Skrymir had tied.

*“Skrymir’s thongs
Seemed to thee hard,
When at the food thou couldst not get,
When, in full health, of hunger dying.”
              -SÆMUND’S EDDA (Thorpe’s tr.)*

**Utgard-loki**

Angry because of his snoring, which kept them awake, Thor thrice dealt him fearful blows with his hammer. These strokes, instead of annihilating the monster, merely evoked sleepy comments to the effect that a leaf, a bit of bark, or a twig from a bird’s nest overhead had fallen upon his face. Early on the morrow, Skrymir left Thor and his companions, pointing out the shortest road to Utgard-loki’s castle, which was built of great ice blocks, with huge glittering icicles as pillars. The gods, slipping between the bars of the great gate, presented themselves boldly before the king of the giants, Utgard-loki, who, recognizing them, immediately pretended to be greatly surprised at their small size, and expressed a wish to see for himself what they could do, as he had often heard their prowess vaunted.

Loki, who had fasted longer than he wished, immediately declared he was ready to eat for a wager with any one. So the king ordered a great wooden trough full of meat to be brought into the hall, and placing Loki at one end and his cook Logi at the other, he bade them see which would win. Although Loki did wonders, and soon reached the middle of the trough, he still found himself beaten, for whereas he had picked the bones clean, his opponent had devoured both them and the trough.

Smiling contemptuously, Utgard-loki said that it was evident they could not do much in the eating line, and so nettled Thor thereby, that he declared if Loki could not eat more than the voracious cook, he felt confident he could drain the biggest vessel in the house, such was his unquenchable thirst. Immediately a horn was brought in, and, Utgard-loki declaring that good drinkers emptied it at one draught, moderately thirsty persons at two, and small drinkers at three, Thor applied his lips to the rim. But, although he drank so deep that he thought he would burst, the liquid still came almost up to the rim when he raised his head. A second and third attempt to empty this horn proved equally unsuccessful. Thialfi then offered to run a race, and a young fellow named Hugi soon outstripped him, although he made remarkably good time.

Thor next proposed to show his strength by lifting great weights, but when challenged to pick up the giant’s cat, he tugged and strained, only to succeed in raising one paw from the floor, although he had taken the precaution to enhance his strength as much as possible by tightening his belt Megingjardar.

*“Strong is great Thor, no doubt, when Meginjardar
He braces tightly o’er his rock-firm loins.”
              -VIKING TALES OF THE NORTH (R. B. Anderson)*

An attempt on his part to wrestle with Utgard-loki’s old nurse Elli, the only opponent deemed worthy of such a puny fellow, ended equally disastrously, and the Gods, acknowledging they were beaten, were hospitably entertained. On the morrow they were escorted to the confines of Utgard, where the giant politely informed them that he hoped they would never call upon him again, as he had been forced to employ magic against them. He then went on to explain that he was the giant Skrymir, and that had he not taken the precaution to interpose a mountain between his head and Thor’s blows, he would have been slain, as deep clefts in the mountain side testified to the god’s strength. Next he informed them that Loki’s opponent was Logi (wild fire); that Thialfi had run a race with Hugi (thought), than which no swifter runner exists; that Thor’s drinking horn was connected with the ocean, where his deep draughts had produced a perceptible ebb ; that the cat was in reality the terrible Midgard serpent encircling the world, which Thor had nearly pulled out of the sea ; and that Elli, his nurse, was old age, whom none can resist. Having finished these explanations and cautioned them never to return or he would defend himself by similar delusions, Utgard-loki vanished, and although Thor angrily brandished his hammer to destroy his castle, such a mist enveloped it that it could not be seen, and the Thunder God was obliged to return to Thrudvang without having accomplished his purpose, the extermination of the race of giants.

*“The strong-armed Thor
Full oft against giant Jotunheim did wend,
But spite his belt celestial, spite his gauntlets,
Utgard-Loki still his throne retains;
Evil, itself a force, to force yields never.”
              -VIKING TALES OF THE NORTH (R. B. Anderson)*

**Thor and Hrungnir**

As Odin was once dashing through the air on his eight-footed steed Sleipnir, he attracted the attention of the giant Hrungnir, who proposed a race, declaring he was sure his own steed Gullfaxi could rival Sleipnir in speed. In the heat of the race, Hrungnir did not even notice in what direction they were going, and, in the vain hope of overtaking Odin, urged his steed on to the very gates of Valhalla. Discovering where he was, the giant then grew pale with fear, for he knew he had jeopardized his life by venturing into the stronghold of the Gods, his hereditary foes.

The Æsir, however, were too honorable to take even an enemy at such a disadvantage, and, instead of doing him any harm, asked him into their banqueting halls, where he proceeded to indulge in liberal potations of the heavenly mead set before him. He soon grew so excited that he began to boast of his power, declaring he would come some day and take possession of Asgard, which he would destroy, as well as all the Gods, excepting only Freya and Sif, upon whom he gazed with an admiring, drunken leer.

The Gods, knowing he was not responsible, let him talk unmolested; but Thor, coming home just then from one of his journeys, and hearing him propose to carry away his beloved Sif, flew into a terrible rage. He furiously brandished his hammer, intending to annihilate the boaster. This the Gods would not permit, however, and they quickly threw themselves between the irate Thunderer and their guest, imploring the former to respect the sacred rights of hospitality, and not desecrate their peace-stead by shedding blood.

Thor at last consented to bridle his wrath, providing the giant Hrungnir would appoint a time and place for a holmgang, as a Northern duel was generally called. Thus challenged, Hrungnir promised to meet Thor at Griottunagard, the confines of his realm, three days later, and departed somewhat sobered by the fright he had experienced. When his fellow giants heard how rash he had been, they chided him sorely; but hearing he was to have the privilege of being accompanied by a squire, whom Thialfi would engage in fight, they proceeded to construct a creature of clay, nine miles long, and proportionately wide, whom they called Mokerkialfi (mist wader). As they could find no human heart big enough to put in this monster’s breast, they secured that of a mare, which, however, kept fluttering and quivering with apprehension. The day of the duel arrived. Hrungnir and his squire were on the ground awaiting the arrival of their respective opponents. The giant had not only a flint heart and skull, but also a shield and club of the same substance, and therefore deemed himself well-nigh invincible. But when he heard a terrible noise, and Thialfi came running up to announce his master’s coming, he gladly followed the herald’s advice and stood upon his shield, lest the thunder god should come up from the ground and attack him unprotected.

A moment later, however, he saw his mistake, for, while Thialfi attacked Mokerkialfi with a spade, Thor came rushing up and flung his hammer full at his opponent’s head. Hrungnir, to ward off the blow, interposed his stone club, which was shivered into pieces, that flew all over the earth, supplying all the flint stones to be found, and one fragment sank deep in Thor’s forehead. As the God dropped fainting to the ground, his hammer crashed against the head of Hrungnir, who fell down dead beside him, in such a position that one of his ponderous legs was thrown over the recumbent god.

*“Thou now remindest me
How I with Hrungnir fought,
That stout-hearted Jotun,
Whose head was all of stone;
Yet I made him fall And sink before me.”
              -SÆMUND’S EDDA (Thorpe’s tr.)*

Thialfi, who, in the mean while, had disposed of the great clay giant with its cowardly mare’s heart, now rushed to his master’s rescue; but all his efforts and those of the assembled Gods, whom he quickly summoned, could not raise the pinioning leg. While they were standing there, helplessly wondering what they should do next, Thor’s little son Magni came up. According to varying accounts, he was then only three days or three years old, but he quickly seized the giant’s foot, and, unaided, set his father free, declaring that had he only been summoned sooner he would easily have disposed of both giant and squire. This exhibition of strength upon his part made the gods wonder greatly, and helped them to recognize the truth of the various predictions, which one and all declared that their descendants would be mightier than they, would survive them, and would rule in their turn over the new heaven and earth.

To reward his son for his timely aid, Thor gave him the steed Gullfaxi (golden-maned), to which he had fallen heir by right of conquest, and Magni ever after rode this marvelous horse, which almost equaled the renowned Sleipnir in speed and endurance.

**Groa, the Sorceress**

After vainly trying to remove the stone splinter from his forehead, Thor sadly returned home to Thrudvang, where Sif’s loving efforts were equally unsuccessful. She therefore resolved to send for Groa (green-making), a sorceress, noted for her skill in medicine and for the efficacy of her spells and incantations. Groa immediately signified her readiness to render every service in her power to the god who had so often benefited her, and solemnly began to recite powerful runes, under whose influence Thor felt the stone grow looser and looser. In his delight at the prospect of a speedy deliverance, Thor wished to reward the enchantress. Knowing that nothing could give greater pleasure to a mother than the prospect of seeing a long-lost child, he therefore told her he had recently crossed the Elivagar, or ice streams, to rescue her little son Orvandil (germ) from the frost giants’ cruel power, and had succeeded in carrying him off in a basket. But, as the little rogue would persist in sticking one of his bare toes through a hole in the basket, it had been frost bitten, and Thor, accidentally breaking it off, had flung it up into the sky, where it shone as a star, known in the North as “Orvandil’s Toe.”

Delighted with these tidings, the prophetess paused in her incantations to express her joy, but, having forgotten just where she left off, she was never able to continue her spell, and the flint stone remained imbedded in Thor’s forehead, whence it could never be dislodged.

**Thor and Thrym**

Of course, as Thor’s hammer always did him such good service, it was the most prized of all his possessions, and his dismay was very great when he awoke one morning and found it gone. His cry of anger and disappointment soon brought Loki to his side, and to him Thor confided the secret of his loss, declaring that were the giants to hear of it, they would soon attempt to storm Asgard and destroy the Gods.

*“Wroth waxed Thor, when his sleep was flown,
And he found his trusty hammer gone;
He smote his brow, his beard he shook,
The son of earth ‘gan round him look;
And this the first word that he spoke
‘Now listen what I tell thee, Loke;
Which neither on earth below is known,
Nor in heaven above: my hammer’s gone.’”
              -THRYM’S QUIDA (Herbert’s tr.)*

Loki declared he would try to discover the thief and recover the hammer, if Freya would only lend him her falcon plumes, and immediately hastened off to Folkvang to borrow them. In the form of a bird he then winged his flight across the river Ifing, and over the barren stretches of Jotunheim, where he shrewdly suspected the thief was to be found. There he saw Thrym, prince of the frost giants and God of the destructive thunder storm, sitting alone on a hillside, and, artfully questioning him, soon learned that he had stolen the hammer, had buried it deep underground, and would never give it up unless Freya were brought to him, in bridal array, ready to become his wife.

*“I have the Thunderer’s hammer bound
Fathoms eight beneath the ground;
With it shall no one homeward tread
Till he bring me Freya to share my bed.”
              -THRYM’S QUIDA (Herbert’s tr.)*

Indignant at the giant’s presumption, Loki returned to Thrudvang, where Thor, hearing what he had learned, declared it would be well to visit Freya and try to prevail upon her to sacrifice herself for the general good. But when the Æsir told the Goddess of beauty what they wished her to do, she flew into such a passion that even her necklace burst. She told them that she would never leave her beloved husband for any God, and much less to marry an ugly old giant and dwell in Jotunheim, where all was dreary in the extreme, and where she would soon die of longing for the green fields and flowery meadows, in which she loved to roam. Seeing that further persuasions would be useless, Loki and Thor returned home and there devised another plan for recovering the hammer. By Heimdall’s advice, Thor borrowed and reluctantly put on all Freya’s clothes and her necklace, and enveloped himself in a thick veil. Loki, having attired himself as a handmaiden, then mounted with him in the goat-drawn chariot, to ride to Jötunheim, where they intended to play the respective parts of the Goddess of beauty and of her attendant.

*“Home were driven
Then the goats,
And hitched to the car;
Hasten they must —
The mountains crashed,
The earth stood in flames:
Odin’s son
Rode to Jötunheim.”
              -NORSE MYTHOLOGY (R. B. Anderson)*

Thrym welcomed his guests at the palace door, overjoyed at the thought that he was about to secure undisputed possession of the Goddess of beauty, for whom he had long sighed in vain. He quickly led them to the banquet hall, where Thor, the bride elect, almost disgraced himself by eating an ox, eight huge salmon, and all the cakes and sweets provided for the women, washing down these miscellaneous viands with two whole barrels of mead.

The giant bridegroom watched these gastronomic feats with amazement, and was not even reassured when Loki confidentially whispered to him that the bride was so deeply in love with him that she had not been able to taste a morsel of food for more than eight days. Thrym then sought to kiss the bride, but drew back appalled at the fire of her glance, which Loki explained as a burning glance of love. The giant’s sister, claiming the usual gifts, was not even noticed; so Loki again whispered to the wondering Thrym that love made people absent-minded. Intoxicated with passion and mead, which he, too, had drunk in liberal quantities, the bridegroom now bade his servants produce the sacred hammer to consecrate the marriage, and as soon as it was brought he himself laid it in the pretended Freya’s lap. The next moment a powerful hand closed over the short handle, and the weapon, rapidly hurled by Thor, soon slew the giant, his sister, and all the invited guests.

*“‘Bear in the hammer to plight the maid;
Upon her lap the bruiser lay,
And firmly plight our hands and fay.’
The Thunderer’s soul smiled in his breast;
When the hammer hard on his lap was placed,
Thrym first, the king of the Thursi, he slew,
And slaughtered all the giant crew.”
              -THRYM’S QUIDA (Herbert’s tr.)*

Leaving a smoking heap of ruins behind them, the Gods then drove rapidly back to Asgard, where the borrowed garments were given back to Freya, and the Æsir all rejoiced at the recovery of the precious hammer. When next Odin glanced towards that part of Jötunheim from the top of his throne Hlidskialf, he saw the ruins covered with tender green shoots, for Thor, having conquered his enemy, had taken possession of his land, which no longer remained barren and desolate as before, but brought forth fruit in abundance.

**Thor and Geirrod**

Loki, in search of adventures, once borrowed Freya’s falcon garb and flew off to another part of Jötunheim, where he perched on top of the gables of Geirrod’s house, and, gazing about him, soon attracted the attention of this giant, who bade one of his servants catch the bird. Amused at the fellow’s clumsy attempts to secure him, Loki flitted about from place to place, only moving just as the giant was about to lay hands upon him, until, miscalculating his distance, he suddenly found himself a captive.

Geirrod, gazing upon the bird’s bright eyes, shrewdly suspected that it was a god in disguise, and to force him to speak, locked him up in a cage, where he kept him for three whole months without food or drink. Conquered at last by hunger and thirst, Loki revealed his identity, and obtained his release by promising that he would induce Thor to visit Geirrod without his hammer, pelt, or magic gauntlet. Loki then flew back to Asgard, and told Thor that he had been royally entertained, and that his host had expressed a strong desire to see the powerful Thunder God, of whom Loki had told him such wonderful tales. Flattered by this artful speech, Thor was soon brought to consent to a journey to Jötunheim, and immediately set out, leaving his three marvelous weapons at home. He and Loki had not gone very far, however, ere they came to the house of the giantess Grid, one of Odin’s many wives, who, seeing Thor disarmed, lent him her own girdle, staff, and glove, warning him to beware of treachery. Some time after leaving her, Thor and Loki came to the river Veimer, which the Thunder God, accustomed to wading, coolly prepared to ford, bidding Loki and Thialfi cling fast to his belt if they would come safe across.

In the middle of the stream, however, a sudden cloudburst and freshet overtook them; the waters began to rise and roar, and although Thor leaned heavily upon his staff, he was almost swept away by the force of the raging current.

*“Wax not, Veimer,
Since to wade I desire
To the realm of the giants!
Know, if thou waxest,
Then waxes my asamight
As high as the heavens.”
              -NORSE MYTHOLOGY (R. B. Anderson)*

Looking up the stream, Thor now became aware of the presence of Geirrod’s daughter Gialp, and rightly suspected that she was the cause of the storm. He picked up a huge bowlder, which he flung at her, muttering that the best place to dam a river was at its source. The rock had the desired effect, for the giantess fled, the waters abated, and Thor, exhausted but safe, pulled himself up on the opposite bank by a little shrub, the mountain-ash or sorb, which has since been known as “Thor’s salvation,” and considered gifted with occult powers. After resting awhile the God resumed his journey; but upon arriving at Geirrod’s house he was so exhausted that he sank wearily down upon the only chair in sight. To his surprise, however, he felt it rise beneath him, and fearing lest he should be crushed against the rafters, he braced the borrowed staff against the ceiling and forced the chair downward with all his might. A terrible cracking, sudden cries, and moans of pain proved that he had broken the backs of the giant’s daughters, Gialp and Greip, who had slipped under his chair and had treacherously tried to slay him.

*“Once I employed
My asamight
In the realm of giants,
When Gialp and Greip,
Geirrod’s daughters,
Wanted to lift me to heaven.”
              -NORSE MYTHOLOGY (R. B. Anderson)*

Geirrod now challenged Thor to show his strength and skill, and without waiting for the preconcerted signal, flung a red-hot wedge at him. Thor, quick of eye and a practiced catcher, caught the missile with the giantess’s iron glove, and hurled it back at his opponent. Such was the force of the god, that the missile passed, not only through the pillar behind which the giant had taken refuge, but through him and the wall of the house, and buried itself deep in the earth without.
Thor then marched up to the giant’s corpse, which at the blow from his weapon had been changed into stone, and set it up in a conspicuous place, as a monument of his strength and of the victory he had won over his redoubtable foes, the mountain giants.

**Worship of Thor**

Thor’s name has been given to many of the places he was wont to frequent, such as the principal harbor of the Faroe Islands, Tórshavn, and to families which claim to be descended from him. It is still extant in such names as Thunderhill in Surrey, and in the family names of Thorburn and Thorwaldsen, but is most conspicuous in the name of one of the days of the week, Thor’s day or Thursday.

*“Over the whole earth
Still is it Thor’s day!”
              -SAGA OF KING OLAF (Longfellow)*

Thor was considered a preeminently benevolent deity, and it was for that reason that he was so widely worshiped and that his temples arose at Moeri, Hlader, Godey, Gothland, Upsala, and other places, where the people never failed to invoke him for a favorable year at Yule-tide, his principal festival. It was customary on this occasion to burn a great log of oak, his sacred tree, as an emblem of the warmth and light of summer, which would soon come to drive away the darkness and cold of winter.

Brides invariably wore red, Thor’s favorite color, which was considered emblematical of love, and for the same reason betrothal rings in the North were almost always set with a red stone.

Thor’s temples and statues, like Odin’s, were fashioned of wood, and the greater number of them were destroyed during the reign of King Olaf the Saint. According to ancient chronicles, this monarch forcibly converted his subjects. He was specially incensed against the inhabitants of a certain province, because they worshiped a rude image of Thor, which they decked with golden ornaments, and before which they set food every evening, declaring the God ate it, as no trace of it was left in the morning.

The people, being called upon in 1030 to renounce this idol in favor of a "true" foreign god, promised to consent if the morrow were cloudy; but when after a whole night spent in ardent prayer, Olaf rapturously beheld a cloudy day, the obstinate people declared they were not yet convinced of his god’s power, and would only believe if the sun shone on the following day.

Once more Olaf spent the night in prayer, but at dawn his chagrin was great to see the sky overcast. Nevertheless, determined to gain his end he assembled the people near Thor’s statue, and after secretly bidding his principal attendant smash the idol with his battle ax if the people turned their eyes away but for a moment, he began to address them. Suddenly, while all were listening to him, Olaf pointed to the horizon, where the sun was slowly breaking its way through the clouds, and exclaimed, “Behold our God!” While the people one and all turned to see what he meant, the attendant broke the idol, and began the process of a forced conversion to the alien middle-eastern based Christianity.