

HOW THOR GOT HIS HAMMER

Many exciting and amusing stories are told about the rollicking red-haired god Thor, the giant-killer. Frequently Loki took part in his escapades but occasionally the Mischief Maker found himself out of favor.

One night in Asgard Loki had difficulty in going to sleep. When he did go off it was not long before he woke again and for some hours he tossed and turned on his lumpy mattress. Just before dawn he could stand it no longer; he crawled out of bed with ruffled hair and bags under his eyes and pulled on his clothes feeling thoroughly spiteful.

He walked out into the deliciously scented air at the moment when the fresh dew was forming and he hated everything. He came to the palace of Thor and as the doors were locked (Thor being away in the east hunting trolls) he scrambled up a trellis supporting a lovely blossoming wisteria until he reached an open window. The window was one of the many in Sif's bedroom. Bent on mischief, Loki cocked a leg over the sill and climbed through. His ferrety eyes swept the daintily furnished room. The golden-haired goddess was fast asleep and her rippling hair lay like shining silk along the pillow and overflowed onto the white damask sheets. The spite in Loki's heart was joined with a malicious envy and quite forgetting the vengeance he might expect from Thor, he softly crept to Sif's dressing-table, picked up a pair of jeweled scissors and proceeded very carefully and quietly to cut off all the precious golden hair.

When he had finished, the goddess's head was left with nothing but downy stubble; she looked for all the world like a shorn dandelion clock. She stirred and began to wake up. Loki quickly bundled the long thick ropes of hair into his tunic and hurried to the window. As he climbed out, one of his sandals fell off and he had no time to retrieve it. He hastened away under cover of the shadows just before dawn broke and safely gained the shelter of his own palace.

When Sif woke her shrieks and wails roused all her neighbors. Freya came and Nanna, Balder's wife and both of them did their best to console her. Nanna picked up the sandal by the window. 'Look,' she said, 'the culprit left his shoe. If we can find its match we'll have our man.' How will that help me?' sobbed Sif, 'I'll still be as bald as a coot! Where's Thor?' she cried, 'It's his fault! He should be here with me not enjoying himself hunting trolls and bagging ogres!'

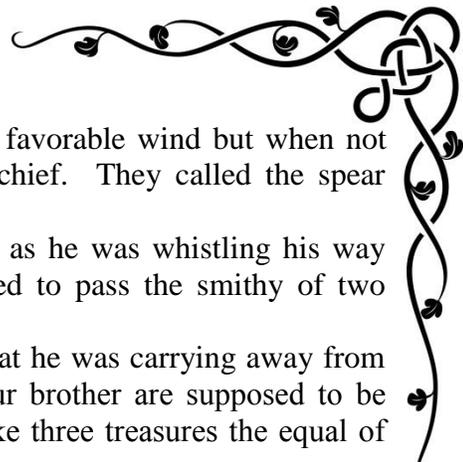
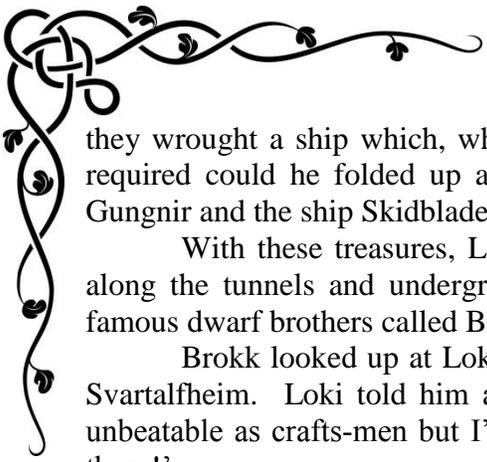
By chance Thor did return home that very morning and when he saw his beautiful wife's disfigurement he was furious. He was shown the sandal.

'Loki, by Jormungander!' he shouted and the windows rattled with his roar. 'I'd know that fancy footgear anywhere! I'll kill him! I'll break every tooth in his head and every tiny bone in his body!' And he made off in his boiling fury to carry out his threat. He caught Loki with one hand by the nape of the neck and began to shake him.

'Stop! Stop! Please,' gasped Loki through chattering teeth, 'I'll never do it again! Oh please stop! I'll go to the dark elves and they'll make golden hair for Sif better than ever grew on that lovely head. Yes, she is lovely Thor, very lovely. And she'll be lovelier still. Oh thank you - thank you please don't shake me anymore!' But Thor was merely changing hands. 'Oh, oh, oh,' moaned Loki as his teeth began again to bang together, 'See, I'll get the d-d-d-dark elves to make a p-p-p-present for Odin and one for F-F-F-Frey as well - perhaps I can get something for you also, Thor!'

Of course the end of it was that by pleading and promises of presents Loki persuaded Thor to spare him and as soon as he could, he left Asgard and made his way to Svartalfheim, the world of the dark elves.

Loki was owed a favor by a tribe of dwarfs called the sons of Ivaldi who lived with the dark elves. Like all the dwarfs, they were skilful artists and craftsmen working the gold and silver they dug from the deep mines and ornamenting their treasures with diamonds and rubies. The sons of Ivaldi did not take long to create the finest head of golden hair Loki had ever seen; and in addition they made a spear for Odin which once released from the hand would never miss the mark at which it was aimed; and for Frey



they wrought a ship which, when the sail was raised would always get a favorable wind but when not required could be folded up and put away in the pocket like a handkerchief. They called the spear Gungnir and the ship Skidblade.

With these treasures, Loki quickly regained his old cockiness and as he was whistling his way along the tunnels and underground borings back to the light he happened to pass the smithy of two famous dwarf brothers called Brokk and Sindri.

Brokk looked up at Loki from his wrinkled face and asked him what he was carrying away from Svartalfheim. Loki told him and wishing to brag he said, 'You and your brother are supposed to be unbeatable as crafts-men but I'm willing to wager my head you can't make three treasures the equal of these!'

'Done!' said Brokk without a moment's hesitation. 'Brother Sindri! Start blowing the fire, get to work on the bellows!'

'No brother,' said Sindri, 'I'm the elder and you're the stronger. You blow the bellows and I'll make the treasures.'

Loki pursed his lips doubtfully. His boastfulness was leading him into trouble again. He stood inside the smithy and watched. Then he sat down in the shadows away from the heat and glare of the ruddy charcoal fire. As far as Brokk and Sindri were concerned he might not have been there, they were so engrossed in their work. And after a few minutes Loki wasn't there - at least not in a form anyone would recognize because it had suddenly occurred to him that he might lose his wager and that meant his head; so he had better do something about it.

When the fire was white hot, Sindri laid a pigskin on the shimmering glow and ordered his brother to keep pumping until he returned and removed the work. He said if Brokk did stop blowing, the craftsmanship would be flawed. Brokk continued to pump the bellows in spite of a sudden agonizing pain caused by a giant horsefly which darted from nowhere, settled on the back of his hand and sucked his blood.

Sindri returned. 'Good,' he said and drew from the fire a real live boar with bristles of gold. The boar grunted. 'Magnificent,' Sindri continued. 'Perfect. We'll call this fellow Gullinbursti.'

For the second treasure, Sindri placed fine gold in the furnace and told Brokk to pump the bellows and not to stop blowing until he came back. He left the smithy and as he did so the horsefly settled on Brokk's neck near his right ear and bit him twice as hard as before. No matter how the dwarf waggled his head the fly would not be dislodged, having bored his sucker well into the tough skin. Nevertheless, the smith continued pumping. 'You appear to be sweating more than usual brother Brokk,' said Sindri 'is anything wrong? My, oh my! This is a very fine ring!' and he drew from the fire the gold ring which

A third time Sindri procured material for his work. On this occasion it was iron. He laid the iron in the flames and ordered Brokk to blow again, repeating that if once he stopped everything would be spoilt. Then he left the smithy.

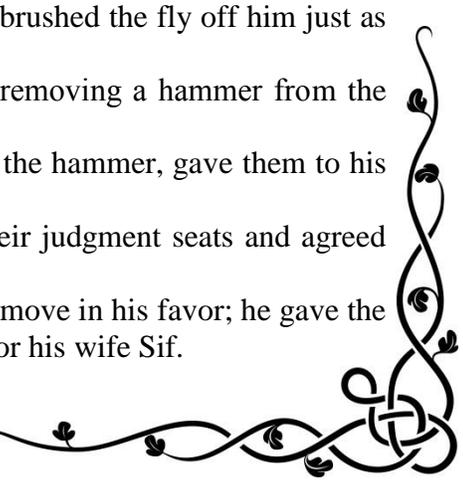
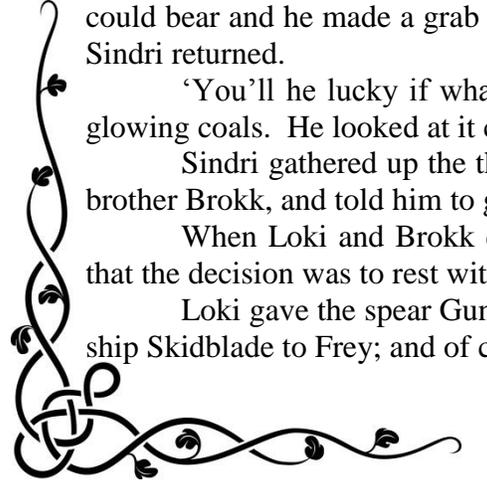
He was hardly away before a huge gadfly alighted between Brokk's eyes and stung his left eyelid so deep and painfully that the blood ran into his eye and he was unable to see. The pain was more than he could bear and he made a grab at the fly when the bellows sank down. He brushed the fly off him just as Sindri returned.

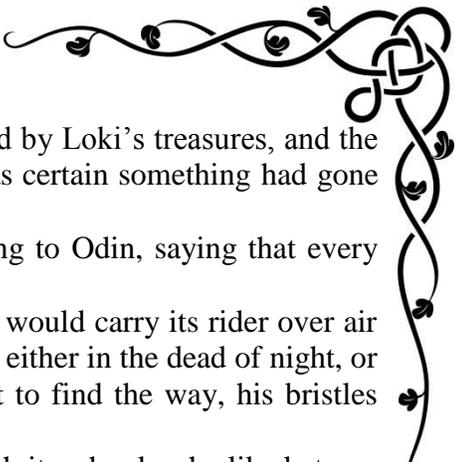
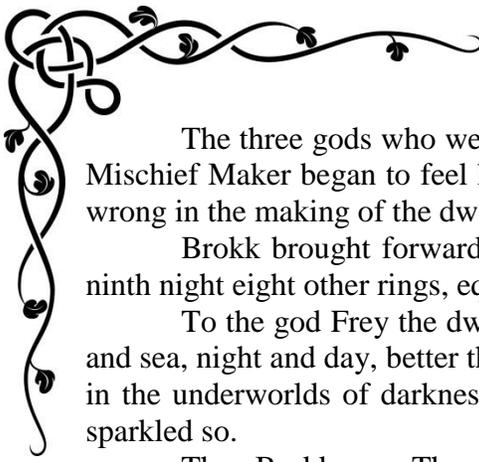
'You'll be lucky if what you have there isn't ruined,' said Sindri, removing a hammer from the glowing coals. He looked at it closely and grunted.

Sindri gathered up the three treasures, the golden boar, the ring and the hammer, gave them to his brother Brokk, and told him to guard them safely and take them to Asgard.

When Loki and Brokk displayed their treasures, the Æsir sat on their judgment seats and agreed that the decision was to rest with Odin, Thor and Frey.

Loki gave the spear Gungnir to Odin, thinking that would be a good move in his favor; he gave the ship Skidblade to Frey; and of course Thor got the golden tresses intended for his wife Sif.





The three gods who were acting as judges were very much impressed by Loki's treasures, and the Mischief Maker began to feel his head was now secure, especially as he was certain something had gone wrong in the making of the dwarf Brokk's third gift - the hammer.

Brokk brought forward his treasures. He gave the massive gold ring to Odin, saying that every ninth night eight other rings, equally precious, would drop from it.

To the god Frey the dwarf gave the boar Gullinbursti. Brokk said it would carry its rider over air and sea, night and day, better than any horse. Nor would it ever be so black, either in the dead of night, or in the underworlds of darkness, that the boar would not have enough light to find the way, his bristles sparkled so.

Then Brokk gave Thor the hammer. He said the god could smite with it as hard as he liked at any target and the hammer would never fail to hit and destroy. Secondly, if thrown, the hammer would return to his hand immediately it had completed its blow. Lastly, it was so small he could, if he wished, carry it inside his shirt. The dwarf coughed apologetically, remembering how he had stopped blowing the bellows. There was one tiny blemish: the handle was a bit short.

The Æsir passed these fabulous treasures from hand to hand and gave appreciative gasps at the fine workmanship and the magic qualities of the gifts. The three appointed as judges put their heads together for a few minutes and after a nail-biting pause (for Loki), Odin announced a verdict. In their judgment, the hammer was best of all the treasures and the finest defense against the frost and mountain giants: the dwarfs Brokk and Sindri had won the wager.

No matter how Loki protested, the gods stuck by their decision. At last the Mischief Maker offered to pay whatever ransom the dwarfs desired in order to redeem his head.

Brokk said, 'No.' He remembered how the horsefly and the gadfly had cruelly tortured him and he was determined to show Loki no mercy.

When Loki realized that he was likely to lose his life he yelled, 'Catch me then!' and as the dwarf went to lay hands on him he was well out of the way, for he had stolen a pair of shoes which enabled him to run on sea and sky as fast as the speed of light.

Brokk begged Thor to corner the runaway and because he was still bitter over what Loki had done to Sif's natural hair, the god of thunder and lightning agreed. Within seconds Thor had trapped Loki by catching his ankle in a jag of forked lightning.

"Come on! You rogue!" thundered Thor, "for once you are going to pay your just debts!"

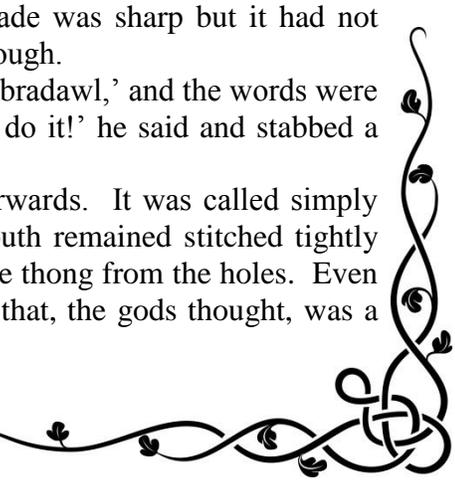
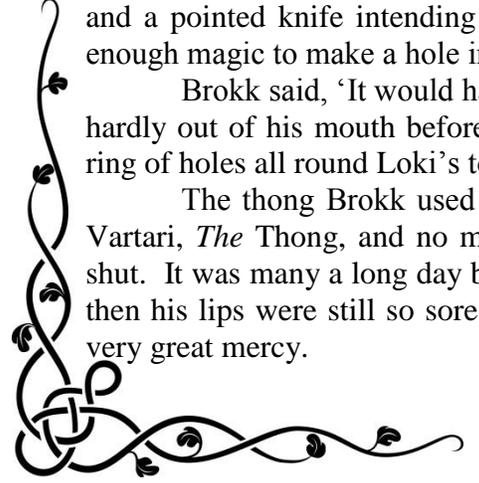
It was a pity that even at the eleventh hour Loki managed to wriggle out of his full punishment, but he did.

When Brokk took up an axe and made ready to chop off Loki's head, the cunning one called on Odin as his blood-brother to witness that it was only the head that entered into the wager. Nobody had agreed to include the neck, and therefore Brokk must in no way injure Loki's neck. This might well be a devious argument, but the gods believed they had to uphold it.

The dwarf was frustrated and his wrath was dreadful to see. He determined that even if he could not have Loki's head, at least he would seal his sly lips forever. He drew from his tunic pocket a thong and a pointed knife intending to sew up Loki's lips. The point of the blade was sharp but it had not enough magic to make a hole in Loki's flesh; the knife just would not go through.

Brokk said, 'It would have been better if I'd had my brother Sindri's bradawl,' and the words were hardly out of his mouth before the awl appeared in his hand. 'Yes, this'll do it!' he said and stabbed a ring of holes all round Loki's top and bottom lips.

The thong Brokk used to sew up Loki's lips was famous ever afterwards. It was called simply Vartari, *The Thong*, and no matter how Loki jerked and tore at it, his mouth remained stitched tightly shut. It was many a long day before he managed to untie Vartari and tear the thong from the holes. Even then his lips were still so sore that he hardly dare speak for months. And that, the gods thought, was a very great mercy.



Name _____

Per _____

How Thor Got His Hammer

1. Where was Thor when Loki Cut off Sif's hair? _____
2. What did Loki accidentally leave behind at Thor's house? _____
3. By pleading and promising _____, Loki persuaded Thor not to kill him.
4. Dwarfs were skillful _____ and _____
5. The Dwarfs made Odin a _____ named _____, and Frey a _____ named _____. They also made Sif a fine head of _____
6. Loki bet the Dwarf brothers (names) _____ and _____, they couldn't make treasures as beautiful the four gifts he possessed.
7. What did Loki stand to lose in the bet? _____
8. Realizing he may lose the bet, what does Loki do? _____

9. The first object created by the Dwarfs is a golden _____ named _____
10. The second object was a gold ring named _____ the _____
11. The third gift was a _____
12. Name the three gods who judged the contest. _____, _____ & _____
13. What gift was given to Odin by Brokk? _____. What magical powers did it possess? _____
14. What gift was given to Frey by Brokk? _____. What magical powers did it possess? _____
15. Which gift was declared the best? _____
16. How does Loki avoid getting his head chopped off? _____

17. What is his punishment instead? _____