

Synopsis

A wayfarer, after a long journey, arrives at Asgard, the home of the mysterious divinities of the north. He wants to learn about them, and the Aesir perform for him a representation of the history of the world from its beginnings, when the mountains, sky and clouds were created from the dismembered body of a giant. The huge tree Yggdrasil travels the universe from top to bottom, and from its branches Odin, the leader and most important of the Aesir, has been hung for nine long nights. Thanks to this initiation, he has learnt magic arts and the secrets of everything.

Further access to knowledge and poetry is guaranteed by a sacred potion, hydromel, made from divine saliva mixed with blood; dwarves and giants contend for it in a history of violence and deception, in which the precious drink changes hands many times until Odin gets it back with an amorous stratagem, seducing the beautiful Gunnlod.

Besides the continuous incursions of the giants, the Aesir must defend themselves from many dangers. The most disturbing and threatening is the Wolf, son of Loki, which the Aesir manage to capture thanks only to a portentous chain and the sacrifice of the hand of Tyr.

In this world governed by cunning, strength and, most of all, fear, it is Thor who supports the barrier against enemy attacks. But his famous and infallible hammer is stolen one day, and to get it back he must go to a dangerous and farcical wedding in the land of the giants, where the bride is actually he, Thor, disguised as a woman...

In other adventurous occasions Thor's reputation is jeopardized. Still travelling with Loki in the land of the giants, they meet the colossal Skrimir (they didn't realize they had spent the night in one of his gloves...) and then, arriving at a mysterious castle, the Aesir are challenged by portentous creatures, who defeat and humiliate them. Only a philosophical explanation can reveal the meaning of these incredible events: there are forces superior even to the gods.

One of these is time. The Aesir remain young by eating the golden apples of Idun, but when she is kidnapped, the world suddenly ages. A temporary equilibrium is re-established thanks to Odin's wisdom and Loki's astuteness (it is always he who rectifies what has gone wrong), and thanks to the melancholy forced wedding of the ice queen Skadhi and the sea god Niord. But then the Aesir find themselves confronting the most tragic and saddest event of their history: the death of Odin and Frigg's adored son, Balder, the young, pure and innocent god who seemed invulnerable but instead succumbed to yet another trap of Loki. Perhaps the Aesir with their crying can still save Frigg's son and bring him back to life, but again Loki with his tricks prevents it.

By now hated by everyone and banned from Asgard, Loki unexpectedly returns to provoke the gods' anger, heaping them with insults and infamy, and then runs away to the mountains, where despite his incessant metamorphoses, he is captured and imprisoned.

At this point, the wayfarer is ready to witness the last part of the story, the twilight of the gods: the day when Loki escapes from his chains, allied with the Wolf, the Serpent and other monstrous creatures, the Aesir have to fight their last battle and perish together with their implacable foes. The heavens, stars and earth are destroyed, as in the ancient prophecies, and the home of the Aesir vanishes before the eyes of the wayfarer, as though it had always been an illusion.