

### Prose Edda Part 3: pp. 70-89

XLIX. Then spake Gangleri: "Have any more matters of note befallen among the Æsir? A very great deed of valor did Thor achieve on that journey." Hárr made answer: "Now shall be told of those tidings which seemed of more consequence to the Æsir. The beginning of the {p. 71} story is this, that Baldr the Good dreamed great and perilous dreams touching his life. When he told these dreams to the Æsir, then they took counsel together: and this was their decision: to ask safety for Baldr from all kinds of dangers. And Frigg took oaths to this purport, that fire and water should spare Baldr, likewise iron and metal of all kinds, stones, earth, trees, sicknesses, beasts, birds, venom, serpents. And when that was done and made known, then it was a diversion of Baldr's and the Æsir, that he should stand up in the Thing,[legislative assembly] and all the others should some shoot at him, some hew at him, some beat him with stones; but whatsoever was done hurt him not at all, and that seemed to them all a very worshipful thing.

"But when Loki Laufeyarson saw this, it pleased him ill that Baldr took no hurt. He went to Fensalir to Frigg, and made himself into the likeness of a woman. Then Frigg asked if that woman knew what the Æsir did at the Thing. She said that all were shooting at Baldr, and moreover, that he took no hurt. Then said Frigg: 'Neither weapons nor trees may hurt Baldr: I have taken oaths of them all.' Then the woman asked: 'Have all things taken oaths to spare Baldr?' and Frigg answered: 'There grows a tree-sprout alone westward of Valhall: it is called Mistletoe; I thought it too young to ask the oath of.' Then straightway the woman turned away; but Loki took Mistletoe and pulled it up and went to the Thing.

"Hödr stood outside the ring of men, because he was blind. Then spake Loki to him: 'Why dost thou not shoot at Baldr?' He answered: 'Because I see not where Baldr {p. 72} is; and for this also, that I am weaponless.' Then said Loki: 'Do thou also after the manner of other men, and show Baldr honor as the other men do. I will direct thee where he stands; shoot at him with this wand.' Hödr took Mistletoe and shot at Baldr, being guided by Loki: the shaft flew through Baldr, and he fell dead to the earth; and that was the greatest mischance that has ever befallen among gods and men.

"Then, when Baldr was fallen, words failed all the Æsir, and their hands likewise to lay hold of him; each looked at the other, and all were of one mind as to him who had wrought the work, but none might take vengeance, so great a sanctuary was in that place. But when the Æsir tried to speak, then it befell first that weeping broke out, so that none might speak to the others with words concerning his grief. But Odin bore that misfortune by so much the worst, as he had most perception of how great harm and loss for the Æsir were in the death of Baldr.

"Now when the gods had come to themselves, Frigg spake, and asked who there might be among the Æsir who would fain have for his own all her love and favor: let him ride the road to Hel, and seek if he may find Baldr, and offer Hel a ransom if she will let Baldr come home to Ásgard. And he is named Hermódr the Bold, Odin's son, who undertook that embassy. Then

Sleipnir was taken, Odin's steed, and led forward; and Hermódr mounted on that horse and galloped off.

"The Æsir took the body of Baldr and brought it to the sea. Hringhorni is the name of Baldr's ship: it was greatest of all ships; the gods would have launched it and made Baldr's pyre thereon, but the ship stirred not forward. Then word was sent to Jötunheim after that giantess who {p.73} is called Hyrrokkin. When she had come, riding a wolf and having a viper for bridle, then she leaped off the steed; and Odin called to four berserks to tend the steed; but they were not able to hold it until they had felled it. Then Hyrrokkin went to the prow of the boat and thrust it out at the first push, so that fire burst from the rollers, and all lands trembled. Thor became angry and clutched his hammer, and would straightway have broken her head, had not the gods prayed for peace for her.

"Then was the body of Baldr borne out on shipboard; and when his wife, Nanna the daughter of Nep, saw that, straightway her heart burst with grief, and she died; she was borne to the pyre, and fire was kindled. Then Thor stood by and hallowed the pyre with Mjöllnir; and before his feet ran a certain dwarf which was named Litr; Thor kicked at him with his foot and thrust him into the fire, and he burned. People of many races visited this burning: First is to be told of Odin, how Frigg and the Valkyrs went with him, and his ravens; but Freyr drove in his chariot with the boar called Gold-Mane, or Fearful-Tusk, and Heimdallr rode the horse called Gold-Top, and Freyja drove her cats. Thither came also much people of the Rime-Giants and the Hill-Giants. Odin laid on the pyre that gold ring which is called Draupnir; this quality attended it, that every ninth night there dropped from it eight gold rings of equal weight. Baldr's horse was led to the bale-fire with all his trappings.

"Now this is to be told concerning Hermódr, that he rode nine nights through dark dales and deep, so that he saw not before he was come to the river Gjöll and rode onto the Gjöll-Bridge; which bridge is thatched with glittering gold. Módgudr is the maiden called who guards the {p. 74} bridge; she asked him his name and race, saying that the day before there had ridden over the bridge five companies of dead men; but the bridge thunders no less under thee alone, and thou hast not the color of dead men. Why ridest thou hither on Hel-way?' He answered: 'I am appointed to ride to Hel to seek out Baldr. Hast thou perchance seen Baldr on Hel-way?' She said that Baldr had ridden there over Gjöll's Bridge,--'but down and north lieth Hel-way.'

"Then Hermódr rode on till he came to Hel-gate; he dismounted from his steed and made his girths fast, mounted and pricked him with his spurs; and the steed leaped so hard over the gate that he came nowise near to it. Then Hermódr rode home to the hall and dismounted from his steed, went into the hall, and saw sitting there in the high-seat Baldr, his brother; and Hermódr tarried there overnight. At morn Hermódr prayed Hel that Baldr might ride home with him, and told her how great weeping was among the Æsir. But Hel said that in this wise it should be put to the test, whether Baldr were so all-beloved as had been said: 'If all things in the world, quick and dead, weep for him, then he shall go back to the Æsir; but he shall remain with Hel if any gainsay it or will not weep.' Then Hermódr arose; but Baldr led him out of the hall, and

took the ring Draupnir and sent it to Odin for a remembrance. And Nanna sent Frigg a linen smock, and yet more gifts, and to Fulla a golden finger-ring.

"Then Hermódr rode his way back, and came into Ásgard, and told all those tidings which he had seen and heard. Thereupon the Æsir sent over all the world messengers to pray that Baldr be wept out of Hel; and all men did this, and quick things, and the earth, and stones, {p. 75} and trees, and all metals,—even as thou must have seen that these things weep when they come out of frost and into the heat. Then, when the messengers went home, having well wrought their errand, they found, in a certain cave, where a giantess sat: she called herself Thökk. They prayed her to weep Baldr out of Hel; she answered:

Thökk will weep | waterless tears  
For Baldr's bale-fare;  
Living or dead, | I loved not the churl's son;  
Let Hel hold to that she hath!

And men deem that she who was there was Loki Laufeyarson, who hath wrought most ill among the Æsir."

L. Then said Gangleri: "Exceeding much Loki had brought to pass, when he had first been cause that Baldr was slain, and then that he was not redeemed out of Hel. Was any vengeance taken on him for this?" Hárr answered: "This thing was repaid him in such wise that he shall remember it long. When the gods had become as wroth with him as was to be looked for, he ran off and hid himself in a certain mountain; there he made a house with four doors, so that he could see out of the house in all directions. Often throughout the day he turned himself into the likeness of a salmon and hid himself in the place called Fránangr-Falls; then he would ponder what manner of wile the gods would devise to take him in the water-fall. But when he sat in the house, he took twine of linen and knitted meshes as a net is made since; but a fire burned before him. Then he saw that the Æsir were close upon him; and Odin had seen from Hlidskjálf where {p. 76} he was. He leaped up at once and out into the river, but cast the net into the fire.

"When the Æsir had come to the house, he went in first who was wisest of all, who is called Kvasir; and when he saw in the fire the white ash where the net had burned, then he perceived that that thing must be a device for catching fish, and told it to the Æsir. Straightway they took hold, and made themselves a net after the pattern of the one which they perceived, by the burnt-out ashes, that Loki had made. When the net was ready, then the Æsir went to the river and cast the net into the fall; Thor held one end of the net, and all of the Æsir held the other, and they drew the net. But Loki darted ahead and lay down between two stones; they drew the net over him, and perceived that something living was in front of it. A second time they went up to the fall and cast out the net, having bound it to something so heavy that nothing should be able to pass under it. Then Loki swam ahead of the net; but when he saw that it was but a short distance to the sea, then he jumped up over the net-rope and ran into the fall. Now the Æsir saw where he went, and went up again to the fall and divided the company into two parts, but Thor

waded along in mid-stream; and so they went out toward the sea. Now Loki saw a choice of two courses: it was a mortal peril to dash out into the sea; but this was the second--to leap over the net again. And so he did: he leaped as swiftly as he could over the net-cord. Thor clutched at him and got hold of him, and he slipped in Thor's hand, so that the hand stopped at the tail; and for this reason the salmon has a tapering back.

"Now Loki was taken truceless, and was brought with {p. 77} them into a certain cave. Thereupon they took three flat stones, and set them on edge and drilled a hole in each stone. Then were taken Loki's sons, Vili and Nari or Narfi; the Æsir changed Váli into the form of a wolf, and he tore asunder Narfi his brother. And the Æsir took his entrails and bound Loki with them over the three stones: one stands under his shoulders, the second under his loins, the third under his boughs; and those bonds were turned to iron. Then Skadi took a venomous serpent and fastened it up over him, so that the venom should drip from the serpent into his face. But Sigyn, his wife, stands near him and holds a basin under the venom-drops; and when the basin is full, she goes and pours out the venom, but in the meantime the venom drips into his face. Then he writhes against it with such force that all the earth trembles: ye call that 'earthquakes.' There he lies in bonds till the Weird of the Gods."

LI. Then said Gangleri: "What tidings are to be told concerning the Weird of the Gods? Never before have I heard aught said of this." Hárr answered: "Great tidings are to be told of it, and much. The first is this, that there shall come that winter which is called the Awful Winter: in that time snow shall drive from all quarters; frosts shall be great then, and winds sharp; there shall be no virtue in the sun. Those winters shall proceed three in succession, and no summer between; but first shall come three other winters, such that over all the world there shall be mighty battles. In that time brothers shall slay each other for greed's sake, and none shall spare father or son in manslaughter and in incest; so it says in *Völuspá*: {p. 78}

Brothers shall strive | and slaughter each other;  
Own sisters' children | shall sin together;  
Ill days among men, | many a whoredom:  
An axe-age, a sword-age, | shields shall be cloven;  
A wind-age, a wolf-age, | ere the world totters.

Then shall happen what seems great tidings: the Wolf shall swallow the sun; and this shall seem to men a great harm. Then the other wolf shall seize the moon, and he also shall work great ruin; the stars shall vanish from the heavens. Then shall come to pass these tidings also: all the earth shall tremble so, and the crags, that trees shall be torn up from the earth, and the crags fall to ruin; and all fetters and bonds shall be broken and rent. Then shall Fenris-Wolf get loose; then the sea shall gush forth upon the land, because the Midgard Serpent stirs in giant wrath and advances up onto the land. Then that too shall happen, that Naglfar shall be loosened, the ship which is so named. (It is made of dead men's nails; wherefore a warning is desirable, that if a man die with unshorn nails, that man adds much material to the ship Naglfar, which gods and men were fain to have finished late.) Yet in this sea-flood Naglfar shall float. Hrymr is the

name of the giant who steers Naglfar. Fenris-Wolf shall advance with gaping mouth, and his lower jaw shall be against the earth, but the upper against heaven,—he would gape yet more if there were room for it; fires blaze from his eyes and nostrils. The Midgard Serpent shall blow venom so that he shall sprinkle all the air and water; and he is very terrible, and shall be on one side of the Wolf. In this din shall the heaven be cloven, and the Sons of Múspell ride thence: Surtr shall ride first, and both before him and after him {p. 79} burning fire; his sword is exceeding good: from it radiance shines brighter than from the sun; when they ride over Bifröst, then the bridge shall break, as has been told before. The Sons of Múspell shall go forth to that field which is called Vígrídr, thither shall come Fenris-Wolf also and the Midgard Serpent; then Loki and Hrymr shall come there also, and with him all the Rime-Giants. All the champions of Hel follow Loki; and the Sons of Múspell shall have a company by themselves, and it shall be very bright. The field Vígrídr is a hundred leagues wide each way.

"When these tidings come to pass, then shall Heimdallr rise up and blow mightily in the Gjallar-Horn, and awaken all the gods; and they shall hold council together. Then Odin shall ride to Mímir's Well and take counsel of Mímir for himself and his host. Then the Ash of Yggdrasill shall tremble, and nothing then shall be without fear in heaven or in earth. Then shall the Æsir put on their war-weeds, and all the Champions, and advance to the field: Odin rides first with the gold helmet and a fair birnie, and his spear, which is called Gungnir. He shall go forth against Fenris-Wolf, and Thor stands forward on his other side, and can be of no avail to him, because he shall have his hands full to fight against the Midgard Serpent. Freyr shall contend with Surtr, and a hard encounter shall there be between them before Freyr falls: it is to be his death that he lacks that good sword of his, which he gave to Skírnir. Then shall the dog Garmr be loosed, which is bound before Gnipa's Cave: he is the greatest monster; he shall do battle with Týr, and each become the other's slayer. Thor shall put to death the Midgard Serpent, and shall stride away nine paces from that spot; then shall he fall dead to the earth, because of the venom which the {p. 80} Snake has blown at him. The Wolf shall swallow Odin; that shall be his ending. But straight thereafter shall Vídarr stride forth and set one foot upon the lower jaw of the Wolf: on that foot he has the shoe, materials for which have been gathering throughout all time. (They are the scraps of leather which men cut out: of their shoes at toe or heel; therefore he who desires in his heart to come to the Æsir's help should cast those scraps away.) With one hand he shall seize the Wolf's upper jaw and tear his gullet asunder; and that is the death of the Wolf. Loki shall have battle with Heimdallr, and each be the slayer of the other. Then straightway shall Surtr cast fire over the earth and burn all the world; so is said in *Völuspá*:

High blows Heimdallr, | the horn is aloft;  
Odin communes | with Mimir's head;  
Trembles Yggdrasill's | towering Ash;  
The old tree wails | when the Ettin is loosed.

What of the Æsir? | What of the Elf-folk?  
All Jötunheim echoes, | the Æsir are at council;

The dwarves are groaning | before their stone doors,  
Wise in rock-walls; | wit ye yet, or what?

Hrymr sails from the east, | the sea floods onward;  
The monstrous Beast | twists in mighty wrath;  
The Snake beats the waves, | the Eagle is screaming;  
The gold-neb tears corpses, | Naglfar is loosed.

From the east sails the keel; | come now Múspell's folk  
Over the sea-waves, | and Loki steereth;  
There are the warlocks | all with the Wolf,--  
With them is the brother | of Býleistr faring.

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Surtr fares from southward | with switch-eating flame;  
On his sword shimmers | the sun of the war-gods;  
The rocks are falling, | and fiends are reeling,  
Heroes tread Hel-way, | heaven is cloven.

Then to the Goddess | a second grief cometh,  
When Odin fares | to fight with the Wolf,  
And Beli's slayer, | the bright god, with Surtr;  
There must fall | Frigg's beloved.

Odin's son goeth | to strife with the Wolf,--  
Vidarr, speeding | to meet the slaughter-beast;  
The sword in his hand | to the heart he thrusteth  
Of the fiend's offspring; avenged is his Father.

Now goeth Hlödyn's | glorious son  
Not in flight from the Serpent, | of fear unheeding;  
All the earth's offspring | must empty the homesteads,  
When furiously smiteth | Midgard's defender.

The sun shall be darkened, | earth sinks in the sea,--  
Glide from the heaven | the glittering stars;  
Smoke-reek rages | and reddening fire:  
The high heat licks | against heaven itself.

And here it says yet so:

Vígridr hight the field | where in fight shall meet  
Surtr and the cherished gods;

An hundred leagues | it has on each side:  
Unto them that field is fated."

LII. Then said Gangleri: 'What shall come to pass {p. 82} afterward, when all the world is burned, and dead are all the gods and all the champions and all mankind? Have ye not said before, that every man shall live in some world throughout all ages?' Then Thridi answered: "In that time the good abodes shall be many, and many the ill; then it shall be best to be in Gimlé in Heaven. Moreover, there is plenteous abundance of good drink, for them that esteem that a pleasure, in the hall which is called Brimir: it stands in Ókólnir. That too is a good hall which stands in Nida Fells, made of red gold; its name is Sindri. In these halls shall dwell good men and pure in heart.

"On Nástrand [Strand of the Dead] is a great hall and evil, and its doors face to the north: it is all woven of serpent-backs like a wattle-house; and all the snake-heads turn into the house and blow venom, so that along the hall run rivers of venom; and they who have broken oaths, and murderers, wade those rivers, even as it says here:

I know a hall standing | far from the sun,  
In Nástrand: the doors; | to northward are turned;  
Venom-drops fill | down from the roof-holes;  
That hall is bordered | with backs of serpents.

There are doomed to wade | the weltering streams  
Men that are mansworn, | and they that murderers are.

But it is worst in Hvergelmir:

There the cursed snake | tears dead men's corpses."

LIII. Then spake Gangleri: "Shall any of the gods live {p. 83} then, or shall there be then any earth or heaven?" Hárr answered: "In that time the earth shall emerge out of the sea, and shall then be green and fair; then shall the fruits of it be brought forth unsown. Víðarr and Váli shall be living, inasmuch as neither sea nor the fire of Surtr shall have harmed them; and they shall dwell at Ida-Plain, where Ásgard was before. And then the sons of Thor, Móði and Magni, shall come there, and they shall have Mjöllnir there. After that Baldr shall come thither, and Höðr, from Hel; then all shall sit down together and hold speech. with one another, and call to mind their secret wisdom, and speak of those happenings which have been before: of the Midgard Serpent and of Fenris-Wolf. Then they shall find in the grass those golden chess-pieces which the Æsir had had; thus is it said:

In the deities' shrines | shall dwell Víðarr and Váli,  
When the Fire of Surtr is slackened;  
Móði and Magni | shall have Mjöllnir  
At the ceasing of Thor's strife.

In the place called Hoddmímir's Holt there shall lie hidden during the Fire of Surtr two of mankind, who are called thus: Líf and Lífthrasir, and for food they shall have the morning-dews. From these folk shall come so numerous an offspring that all the world shall be peopled, even as is said here:

Líf and Lífthrasir, | these shall lurk hidden  
In the Holt of Hoddmímir;  
The morning dewes | their meat shall be;  
Thence are gendered the generations.

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And it may seem wonderful to thee, that the sun shall have borne a daughter not less fair than herself; and the daughter shall then tread in the steps of her mother, as is said here:

The Elfin-beam | shall bear a daughter,  
Ere Fenris drags her forth;  
That maid shall go, | when the great gods die,  
To ride her mother's road.

But now, if thou art able to ask yet further, then indeed I know not whence answer shall come to thee, for I never heard any man tell forth at greater length the course of the world; and now avail thyself of that which thou hast heard."

LIV. Thereupon Gangleri heard great noises on every side of him; and then, when he had looked about him more, lo, he stood out of doors on a level plain, and saw no hall there and no castle. Then he went his way forth and came home into his kingdom, and told those tidings which he had seen and heard; and after him each man told these tales to the other. {p. 87} But the Æsir sat them down to speak together, and took counsel and recalled all these tales which had been told to him. And they gave these same names that were named before to those men and places that were there, to the end that when long ages should have passed away, men should not doubt thereof, that those Æsir that were but now spoken of, and these to whom the same names were then given, were all one.