



How Brock Brought Judgment on Loki

Padraic Colum

Nordic

Easy

14 min read

It was then that Loki, with the wish of making the Æsir and the Vanir friendly to him once more, brought out the wonderful things he had gained from the Dwarfs—the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir. The Æsir and the Vanir marveled at things so wonderful. Loki gave the spear as a gift to Odin, and to Frey, who was chief of the Vanir, he gave the boat Skidbladnir.

All Asgard rejoiced that things so wonderful and so helpful had been brought to them. And Loki, who had made a great show in giving these gifts, said boastingly:

“None but the Dwarfs who work for me could make such things. There are other Dwarfs, but they are as unhandy as they are misshapen. The Dwarfs who are my servants are the only ones who can make such wonders.”

Now Loki in his boastfulness had said a foolish thing. There were other Dwarfs besides those who had worked for him, and one of these was there in Asgard. All unknown to Loki he stood in the shadow of Odin’s seat, listening to what was being said. Now he went over to Loki, his little, unshapely form trembling with rage—Brock, the most spiteful of all the Dwarfs.

“Ha, Loki, you boaster,” he roared, “you lie in your words. Sindri, my brother, who would scorn to serve you, is the best smith in Svartheim.”

The Æsir and the Vanir laughed to see Loki outfaced by Brock the Dwarf in the middle of his boastfulness. As they laughed Loki grew angry.

“Be silent, Dwarf,” he said, “your brother will know about smith’s work when he goes to the Dwarfs who are my friends, and learns something from them.”

“He learn from the Dwarfs who are your friends! My brother Sindri learn from the Dwarfs who are your friends!” Brock roared, in a greater rage than before. “The things you have brought out of Svartheim would not be noticed by the Æsir and the Vanir if they were put beside the things that my brother Sindri can make.”

“Sometime we will try your brother Sindri and see what he can do,” said Loki.

“Try now, try now,” Brock shouted. “I’ll wager my head against yours, Loki, that his work will make the Dwellers in Asgard laugh at your boasting.”

“I will take your wager,” said Loki. “My head against yours. And glad will I be to see that ugly head of yours off your misshapen shoulders.”

“The Æsir will judge whether my brother’s work is not the best that ever came out of Svartheim. And they will see to it that you will pay your wager, Loki, the head off your shoulders. Will ye not sit in judgment, O Dwellers in Asgard?”

“We will sit in judgment,” said the Æsir. Then, still full of rage, Brock the Dwarf went down to Svartheim, and to the place where his brother Sindri worked.

There was Sindri in his glowing forge, working with bellows and anvil and hammers beside him, and around him masses of metal—gold and silver, copper and iron. Brock told his tale, how he had wagered his head against Loki’s that Sindri could make things more wonderful than the spear and the boat that Loki had brought into Asgard.

“You were right in what you said, my brother,” said Sindri, “and you shall not lose your head to Loki. But the two of us must work at what I am going to forge. It will be your work to keep the fire so that it will neither blaze

up nor die down for a single instant. If you can keep the fire as I tell you, we will forge a wonder. Now, brother, keep your hands upon the bellows, and keep the fire under your control.”

Then into the fire Sindri threw, not a piece of metal, but a pig’s skin. Brock kept his hands on the bellows, working it so that the fire neither died down nor blazed up for a single instant. And in the glowing fire the pigskin swelled itself into a strange shape.

But Brock was not left to work the bellows in peace. In to the forge flew a gadfly. It lighted on Brock’s hands and stung them. The Dwarf screamed with pain, but his hands still held the bellows, working it to keep the fire steady, for he knew that the gadfly was Loki, and that Loki was striving to spoil Sindri’s work. Again the gadfly stung his hands, but Brock, although his hands felt as if they were pierced with hot irons, still worked the bellows so that the fire did not blaze up or die down for a single instant.

Sindri came and looked into the fire. Over the shape that was rising there he said words of magic. The gadfly had flown away, and Sindri bade his brother cease working. He took out the thing that had been shaped in the fire, and he worked over it with his hammer. It was a wonder indeed—a boar, all golden, that could fly through the air, and that shed light from its bristles as it flew. Brock forgot the pain in his hands and screamed with joy. “This is the greatest of wonders,” he said. “The Dwellers in Asgard will have to give the judgment against Loki. I shall have Loki’s head!”

But Sindri said, “The boar Golden Bristle may not be judged as great a wonder as the spear Gungnir or the boat Skidbladnir. We must make something more wonderful still. Work the bellows as before, brother, and do not let the fire die down or blaze up for a single instant.”

Then Sindri took up a piece of gold that was so bright it lightened up the dark cavern that the Dwarfs worked in. He threw the piece of gold into the fire. Then he went to make ready something else and left Brock to work the bellows.

The gadfly flew in again. Brock did not know it was there until it lighted on the back of his neck. It stung him till Brock felt the pain was wrenching him apart. But still he kept his hands on the bellows, working it so that the fire neither blazed up nor died down for a single instant. When Sindri came to look into the fire, Brock was not able to speak for pain.

Again Sindri said magic words over the gold that was being smelted in the fire. He took it out of the glow and

worked it over on the main-anvil. Then in a while he showed Brock something that looked like the circle of their sun. “A splendid armring, my brother,” he said. “An armring for a God’s right arm. And this ring has hidden wonders. Every ninth night eight rings like itself will drop from this armring, for this is Draupnir, the Ring of Increase.”

“To Odin, the Father of the Gods, the ring shall be given,” said Brock. “And Odin will have to declare that nothing so wonderful or so profitable to the Gods was ever brought into Asgard. O Loki, cunning Loki, I shall have thy head in spite of thy tricks.”

“Be not too hasty, brother,” said Sindri. “What we have done so far is good. But better still must be the thing that will make the Dwellers in Asgard give the judgment that delivers Loki’s head to thee. Work as before, brother, and do not let the fire blaze up or die down for a single instant.”

This time Sindri threw into the fire a bar of iron. Then he went away to fetch the hammer that would shape it. Brock worked the bellows as before, but only his hands were steady, for every other part of him was trembling with expectation of the gadfly’s sting.

He saw the gadfly dart into the forge. He screamed as it flew round and round him, searching out a place where it might sting him most fearfully. It lighted down on his forehead, just between his eyes. The first sting it gave took the sight from his eyes. It stung again and Brock felt the blood flowing down. Darkness filled the cave. Brock tried to keep his hands steady on the bellows, but he did not know whether the fire was blazing up or dying down. He shouted and Sindri hurried up.

Sindri said the magic words over the thing that was in the fire. Then he drew it out. “An instant more,” he said, “and the work would have been perfect. But because you let the fire die down for an instant the work is not as good as it might have been made.” He took what was shaped in the fire to the main-anvil and worked over it. Then when Brock’s eyesight came back to him he saw a great hammer, a hammer all of iron. The handle did not seem to be long enough to balance the head. This was because the fire had died down for an instant while it was being formed.

“The hammer is Miölnir,” said Sindri, “and it is the greatest of the things that I am able to make. All in Asgard must rejoice to see this hammer. Thor only will be able to wield it. Now I am not afraid of the judgment that the Dwellers in Asgard will give.”

“The Dwellers in Asgard will have to give judgment for us,” Brock cried out. “They will have to give judgment for us, and the head of Loki, my tormentor, will be given me.”

“No more wonderful or more profitable gifts than these have ever been brought into Asgard,” Sindri said. “Thy head is saved, and thou wilt be able to take the head of Loki who was insolent to us. Bring it here, and we will throw it into the fire in the forge.”

The Æsir and the Vanir were seated in the Council House of Asgard when a train of Dwarfs appeared before them. Brock came at the head of the train, and he was followed by a band of Dwarfs carrying things of great weight. Brock and his attendants stood round the throne of Odin, and hearkened to the words of the Father of the Gods.

“We know why you have come into Asgard from out of Svarheim,” Odin said. “You have brought things wonderful and profitable to the Dwellers in Asgard. Let what you have brought be seen, Brock. If they are more wonderful and more useful than the things Loki has brought out of Svarheim, the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir, we will give judgment for you.”

Then Brock commanded the Dwarfs who waited on him to show the Dwellers in Asgard the first of the wonders that Sindri had made. They brought out the boar, Golden Bristle. Round and round the Council House the boar flew, leaving a track of brightness. The Dwellers in Asgard said one to the other that this was a wonder indeed. But none would say that the boar was a better thing to have in Asgard than the spear that would hit the mark no matter how badly it was flung, or the boat Skidbladnir that would sail on any sea, and that could be folded up so small that it would fit in any one’s pocket: none would say that Golden Bristle was better than these wonders.

To Frey, who was Chief of the Vanir, Brock gave the wondrous boar.

Then the attending Dwarfs showed the armring that was as bright as the circle of the Sun. All admired the noble ring. And when it was told how every ninth night this ring dropped eight rings of gold that were like itself, the Dwellers in Asgard spoke aloud, all saying that Draupnir, the Ring of Increase, was a wonder indeed. Hearing their voices raised, Brock looked triumphantly at Loki who was standing there with his lips drawn closely together.

To Odin, the Father of the Gods, Brock gave the noble armring.

Then he commanded the attending Dwarfs to lay before Thor the hammer Miölnir. Thor took the hammer up and swung it around his head. As he did so he uttered a great cry. And the eyes of the Dwellers in Asgard lightened up when they saw Thor with the hammer Miölnir in his hands; their eyes lightened up and from their lips came the cry, "This is a wonder, a wonder indeed! With this hammer in his hand none can withstand Thor, our Champion. No greater thing has ever come into Asgard than the hammer Miölnir."

Then Odin, the Father of the Gods, spoke from his throne, giving judgment. "The hammer Miölnir that the Dwarf Brock has brought into Asgard is a thing wonderful indeed and profitable to the Gods. In Thor's hands it can crush mountains, and hurl the Giant race from the ramparts of Asgard. Sindri the Dwarf has forged a greater thing than the spear Gungnir and the boat Skidbladnir. There can be no other judgment."

Brock looked at Loki, showing his gnarled teeth. "Now, Loki, yield your head, yield your head," he cried.

"Do not ask such a thing," said Odin. "Put any other penalty on Loki for mocking you and tormenting you. Make him yield to you the greatest thing that it is in his power to give."

"Not so, not so," screamed Brock. "You Dwellers in Asgard would shield one another. But what of me? Loki would have taken my head had I lost the wager. Loki has lost his head to me. Let him kneel down now till I cut it off."

Loki came forward, smiling with closed lips. "I kneel before you, Dwarf," he said. "Take off my head. But be careful. Do not touch my neck. I did not bargain that you should touch my neck. If you do, I shall call upon the Dwellers in Asgard to punish you."

Brock drew back with a snarl. "Is this the judgment of the Gods?" he asked.

"The bargain you made, Brock," said Odin, "was an evil one, and all its evil consequences you must bear."

Brock, in a rage, looked upon Loki, and he saw that his lips were smiling. He stamped his feet and raged. Then he went up to Loki and said, "I may not take your head, but I can do something with your lips that mock me."

"What would you do, Dwarf?" asked Thor.

“Sew Loki’s lips together,” said Brock, “so that he can do no more mischief with his talk. You Dwellers in Asgard cannot forbid me to do this. Down, Loki, on your knees before me.”

Loki looked round on the Dwellers in Asgard and he saw that their judgment was that he must kneel before the Dwarf. He knelt down with a frown upon his brow. “Draw your lips together, Loki,” said Brock. Loki drew his lips together while his eyes flashed fire. With an awl that he took from his belt Brock pierced Loki’s lips. He took out a thong and tightened them together. Then in triumph the Dwarf looked on Loki.

“O Loki,” he said, “you boasted that the Dwarfs who worked for you were better craftsmen than Sindri, my brother. Your words have been shown to be lies. And now you cannot boast for a while.”

Then Brock the Dwarf, with great majesty, walked out of the Council House of Asgard, and the attending Dwarfs marched behind him in procession. Down the passages in the earth the Dwarfs went, singing the song of Brock’s triumph over Loki. And in Svartheim it was told forever after how Sindri and Brock had prevailed.

In Asgard, now that Loki’s lips were closed, there was peace and a respite from mischief. No one amongst the Æsir or the Vanir were sorry when Loki had to walk about in silence with his head bent low.

Read more fairy tales on Fairytalez.com