



# *The Children of Loki*

Padraic Colum

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*Easy*  
*8 min read*

The children of Loki and the witch Angerboda were not as the children of men: they were formless as water, or air, or fire is formless, but it was given to each of them to take on the form that was most like to their own greed.

Now the Dwellers in Asgard knew that these powers of evil had been born into the world and they thought it well that they should take on forms and appear before them in Asgard. So they sent one to Jarnvid, the Iron Wood, bidding Loki bring before the Gods the powers born of him and the witch Angerboda. So Loki came into Asgard once more. And his offspring took on forms and showed themselves to the Gods. The first, whose greed was destruction, showed himself as a fearful Wolf. Fenrir he was named. And the second, whose greed was slow destruction, showed itself as a Serpent. Jörmungand it was called. The third, whose greed was for withering of all life, took on a form also. When the Gods saw it they were affrighted. For this had the form of a woman, and one side of her was that of a living woman and the other side of her was that of a corpse. Fear ran through Asgard as this form was revealed and as the name that went with it, Hela, was uttered.

Far out of sight of the Gods Hela was thrust. Odin took her and hurled her down to the deeps that are below the world. He cast her down to Niflheim, where she took to herself power over the nine regions. There, in the place that is lowest of all, Hela reigns. Her hall is Elvidnir; it is set round with high walls and it has barred gates; Precipice is the threshold of that hall; Hunger is the table within it; Care is the bed, and Burning Anguish is the hanging of the chamber.

Thor laid hold upon Jörmungand. He flung the serpent into the ocean that engirdles the world. But in the depths of the ocean Jörmungand flourished. It grew and grew until it encircled the whole world. And men knew it as the Midgard Serpent.

Fenrir the Wolf might not be seized upon by any of the Æsir. Fearfully he ranged through Asgard and they were only able to bring him to the outer courts by promising to give him all the food he was able to eat.

The Æsir shrank from feeding Fenrir. But Tyr, the brave swordsman, was willing to bring food to the Wolf's lair. Every day he brought him huge provision and fed him with the point of his sword. The Wolf grew and grew until he became monstrous and a terror in the minds of the Dwellers in Asgard.

At last the Gods in council considered it and decided that Fenrir must be bound. The chain that they would bind him with was called Laeding. In their own smithy the Gods made it and its weight was greater than Thor's hammer.

Not by force could the Gods get the fetter upon Fenrir, so they sent Skirnir, the servant of Frey, to beguile the Wolf into letting it go upon him. Skirnir came to his lair and stood near him, and he was dwarfed by the Wolf's monstrous size.

"How great may thy strength be, Mighty One?" Skirnir asked. "Couldst thou break this chain easily? The Gods would try thee."

In scorn Fenrir looked down on the fetter Skirnir dragged. In scorn he stood still allowing Laeding to be placed upon him. Then, with an effort that was the least part of his strength, he stretched himself and broke the chain in two.

The Gods were dismayed. But they took more iron, and with greater fires and mightier hammer blows they forged another fetter. Dromi, this one was called, and it was half again as strong as Laeding was. Skirnir the

Venturesome brought it to the Wolf's lair, and in scorn Fenrir let the mightier chain be placed upon him.

He shook himself and the chain held. Then his eyes became fiery and he stretched himself with a growl and a snarl. Dromi broke across, and Fenrir stood looking balefully at Skirnir.

The Gods saw that no chain they could forge would bind Fenrir and they fell more and more into fear of him. They took council again and they bethought them of the wonder-work the Dwarfs had made for them, the spear Gungnir, the ship Skidbladnir, the hammer Miölnir. Could the Dwarfs be got to make the fetter to bind Fenrir? If they would do it the Gods would add to their domain.

Skirnir went down to Svartheim with the message from Asgard. The Dwarf Chief swelled with pride to think that it was left to them to make the fetter that would bind Fenrir.

“We Dwarfs can make a fetter that will bind the Wolf,” he said. “Out of six things we will make it.”

“What are these six things?” Skirnir asked.

“The roots of stones, the breath of a fish, the beards of women, the noise made by the footfalls of cats, the sinews of bears, the spittle of a bird.”

“I have never heard the noise made by a cat's footfall, nor have I seen the roots of stones nor the beards of women. But use what things you will, O Helper of the Gods.”

The Chief brought his six things together and the Dwarfs in their smithy worked for days and nights. They forged a fetter that was named Gleipnir. Smooth and soft as a silken string it was. Skirnir brought it to Asgard and put it into the hands of the Gods.

Then a day came when the Gods said that once again they should try to put a fetter upon Fenrir. But if he was to be bound they would bind him far from Asgard. Lyngvi was an island that they often went to to make sport, and they spoke of going there. Fenrir growled that he would go with them. He came and he sported in his own terrible way. And then as if it were to make more sport, one of the Æsir shook out the smooth cord and showed it to Fenrir.

“It is stronger than you might think, Mighty One,” they said. “Will you not let it go upon you that we may see you break it?”

Fenrir out of his fiery eyes looked scorn upon them. “What fame would there be for me,” he said, “in breaking such a binding?”

They showed him that none in their company could break it, slender as it was. “Thou only art able to break it, Mighty One,” they said.

“The cord is slender, but there may be an enchantment in it,” Fenrir said.

“Thou canst not break it, Fenrir, and we need not dread thee any more,” the Gods said.

Then was the Wolf ravenous wroth, for he lived on the fear that he made in the minds of the Gods. “I am loth to have this binding upon me,” he said, “but if one of the Æsir will put his hand in my mouth as a pledge that I shall be freed of it, I will let ye put it on me.”

The Gods looked wistfully on one another. It would be health to them all to have Fenrir bound, but who would lose his hand to have it done? One and then another of the Æsir stepped backward. But not Tyr, the brave swordsman. He stepped to Fenrir and laid his left hand before those tremendous jaws.

“Not thy left hand—thy swordhand, O Tyr,” growled Fenrir, and Tyr put his swordhand into that terrible mouth.

Then the cord Gleipnir was put upon Fenrir. With fiery eyes he watched the Gods bind him. When the binding was on him he stretched himself as before. He stretched himself to a monstrous size but the binding did not break off him. Then with fury he snapped his jaws upon the hand, and Tyr’s hand, the swordsman’s hand, was torn off.

But Fenrir was bound. They fixed a mighty chain to the fetter, and they passed the chain through a hole they bored through a great rock. The monstrous Wolf made terrible efforts to break loose, but the rock and the chain and the fetter held. Then seeing him secured, and to avenge the loss of Tyr’s hand, the Gods took Tyr’s sword and drove it to the hilt through his underjaw. Horribly the Wolf howled. Mightily the foam flowed down from his jaws. That foam flowing made a river that is called Von—a river of fury that flowed on until Ragnarök came, the Twilight of the Gods.

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