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Cover illustration:

The legend reads 'Here Odin is
riding the horse Sleipner. It is
the best of all horses' (see p. 36).

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mothers, guardian of the gods, as was written above, or the white As, Loki's enemy, recoverer of Freyia's necklace. A sword is called Heimdall's head; it is said he was struck through with a man's head. He is the subject of the poem *Heimdalargaldr*, and ever since the head has been called Heimdall's doom: man's doom is an expression for sword. Heimdall is the owner of Gulltopp. He is also the visitor to Vagasker and Singastein; on that occasion he contended with Loki for the Brisingamen. He is also known as Vindhler. Ulf Uggason composed a long passage in *Husdrapa* based on this story, and it is mentioned there that they were in the form of seals. Also son of Odin.

How shall Tyr be referred to? By calling him the one-handed As and feeder of the wolf, battle-god, son of Odin.

How shall Bragi be referred to? By calling him Idunn's husband, inventor of poetry (*brag*) and the long-bearded As. It is from his name that the expression 'beard-*bragi*' comes for someone who has a big beard. Also son of Odin.

How shall Vidar be referred to? He may be called the silent As, possessor of the iron shoe, enemy and slayer of Fenriswolf, the gods' avenging As, father's homestead-inhabiting As and son of Odin, brother of the Æsir.

How shall Vali be referred to? By calling him son of Odin and Rind, stepson of Frigg, brother of the Æsir, Baldr's avenging As, enemy of Hod and his slayer, father's homestead-inhabiter.

How shall Hod be referred to? By calling him the blind As, Baldr's slayer, shooter of mistletoe, son of Odin, Hel's companion, Vali's enemy.

How shall Ull be referred to? By calling him son of Sif, stepson of Thor, ski-As, bow-As, hunting As, shield-As.

How shall Hænir be referred to? By calling him Odin's table-companion or comrade or confidant and the swift As and the long foot and mud-king.

How shall Loki be referred to? By calling him son of Farbauti and Laufey, of Nal, brother of Byleist and Helblindi, father of Vanargand, i.e. Fenriswolf, and of Iormungand, i.e. the Midgard serpent, and Hel's and Nari's and Ali's relative and father, brother, comrade and table-companion of Odin and the Æsir, Geirrod's visitor and casket-ornament, thief from giants, of goat and Brisingamen and Idunn's apples, relative of Sleipnir, husband

of Sigyn, enemy of gods, Sif's hair-harmer, maker of mischief, the cunning As, accuser and tricker of the gods, contriver of Baldr's death, the bound one, wrangler with Heimdall and Skadi. As Ulf Uggason says here:

Renowned defender [Heimdall] of the powers' way [Bifrost], kind of counsel, competes with Farbauti's terribly sly son at Singastein. Son of eight mothers plus one, mighty of mood, is first to get hold of the beautiful sea-kidney [jewel, Brisingamen]. I announce it in strands of praise.

Here it is mentioned that Heimdall is son of nine mothers.

Now there shall be told more of the underlying stories from which those kennings just listed have originated, and of which the origins have not already been told, just as Bragi told Ægir how Thor had gone to eastern parts to thrash trolls, but Odin rode Sleipnir into Giantland and arrived at a giant's called Hrungrnir. Then Hrungrnir asked what sort of person this was with the golden helmet riding sky and sea, and said he had a marvellously good horse. Odin said he would wager his head on it that there would be no horse as good to be found in Giantland. Hrungrnir said it was a good horse, but declared he had a horse that must be much longer-paced, it was called Gullfaxi. Hrungrnir had got angry and leaped up on his horse and galloped after Odin, intending to pay him back for his boasting. Odin galloped so hard that he kept ahead on the next rise in the ground, and Hrungrnir was in such a great giant fury that the first thing he knew was that he had rushed in through the As-gates. And when he got to the hall doors, Æsir invited him in for a drink. He went into the hall and demanded that he should be given a drink. Then the goblets that Thor normally drank out of were brought out, and Hrungrnir drained each one. And when he became drunk there was no lack of big words: he said he was going to remove Val-hall and take it to Giantland, but bury Asgard and kill all the gods, except that he was going to take Freyia and Sif home with him, and Freyia was the only one then who dared to bring him drink, and he declared he was going to drink all the Æsir's ale. And when the Æsir got tired of his boasting they invoked the name of Thor. Immediately Thor entered the hall with hammer raised up and in great anger.

and asked who was responsible for cunning giants being there drinking, and who had guaranteed Hrungrir safety while he was in Val-hall and why Freyia should be serving him drink as if at the Æsir's banquet. Then Hrungrir replied, looking at Thor with no friendly eyes, and said that Odin had invited him to a drink and that he was under his protection. Then Thor said that Hrungrir was going to regret that invitation before he got out. Hrungrir said it would be no honour to Asa-Thor to kill him when he was unarmed, whereas it would be a greater proof of his valour if he dared to fight with him on the frontier at Griotunagardar.

'And it has been a very foolish thing for me to do,' he said, 'to leave behind at home my shield and whetstone, but if I had my weapons here, we would hold the duel now, but as it is I declare you will be guilty of baseness if you go and kill me when I am unarmed.'

Thor was eager not to let anything stop him from going to single combat when he had been challenged to a duel, for no one had ever done that to him before. Then Hrungrir went off on his way and galloped mightily until he got into Giantland, and his journey was very widely talked of among the giants, together with the fact that an appointment had been made between him and Thor. The giants felt there was a great deal at stake for them as to which one won the victory. They would have little good to look forward to from Thor if Hrungrir died, for he was the strongest of them. Then the giants made a person at Griotunagardar of clay, and he was nine leagues high and three broad beneath the arms, but they could not get a heart big enough to suit him until they took one out of a certain mare, and this turned out not to be steady in him when Thor came. Hrungrir had a heart that is renowned, made of solid stone and spiky with three points just like the symbol for carving called Hrungrir's heart has ever since been made. His head was also of stone. His shield was also stone, broad and thick, and he held the shield before him as he stood at Griotunagardar waiting for Thor, and he had a whetstone as weapon and rested it on his shoulder and he did not look at all pleasant. On one side of him stood the clay giant, whose name was Mokkurkalfi, and he was quite terrified. They say he wet himself when he saw Thor. Thor went to keep his appointment for the duel, and with him Thialfi. Then Thialfi ran on ahead to where

Hrungrir was standing and said to him:

'You are standing unguardedly, giant, you've got your shield in front of you, but Thor has seen you and he is travelling by the lower route underground, and he is going to come at you from below.'

Then Hrungrir shoved the shield beneath his feet and stood on it, and held the whetstone with both hands. Next he saw lightnings and heard great thunders. Then he saw Thor in an As-rage, he was travelling at an enormous rate and swung his hammer and threw it from a great distance at Hrungrir. Hrungrir raised the whetstone with both hands, threw it in return. It met the hammer in flight, the whetstone, and the whetstone broke in two. One piece fell to the ground, and from it have come all whetstone rocks. The other piece crashed into Thor's head so that he fell forwards to the ground, but the hammer Miöllnir hit the middle of Hrungrir's head and shattered his skull into small fragments, and he fell forwards over Thor so that his leg lay across Thor's neck. Thialfi attacked Mokkurkalfi, and he fell with little glory. Then Thialfi went up to Thor and went to remove Hrungrir's leg from him and was unable to manage it. Then all the Æsir came up when they found out that Thor had fallen, and went to remove the leg from him and could not move it at all. Then Magni, son of Thor and Iarnsaxa, arrived. He was then three years old. He threw Hrungrir's leg off Thor and said:

'Isn't it a terrible shame, father, that I arrived so late. I think I would have knocked this giant into Hel with my fist if I had come across him.'

Then Thor stood up and welcomed his son warmly and said he would grow up to be a powerful person.

'And I have decided,' he said, 'to give you the horse Gullfaxi, which used to be Hrungrir's.'

Then spoke Odin and said it was wrong of Thor to give that fine horse to the son of a giantess and not to his own father.

Thor returned home to Thrudvangar and the whetstone remained in his head. Then there arrived a sorceress called Groa, wife of Aurvandil the Bold. She chanted her spells over Thor until the whetstone began to come loose. When Thor felt this and it seemed likely that the whetstone was going to be got out, he wanted to repay Groa for her treatment and give her pleasure. He

told her these tidings that he had waded south across Elivagar carrying Aurvandil in a basket on his back south from Giantland, and there was this proof, that one of his toes had been sticking out of the basket and had got frozen, so Thor broke it off and threw it up in the sky and made out of it the star called Aurvandil's toe. Thor said it would not be long before Aurvandil was home, and Groa was so pleased that she could remember none of her spells, and the whetstone got no looser and is still stuck in Thor's head. And this is something that is taboo, throwing whetstones across a room, for then the whetstone in Thor's head stirs. Thiodolf of Hvinir has composed a passage based on this story in *Haustlong*. It says there:

Also can be seen on the circle [of the shield], O cave-fire-[gold]-tree [man], how the terror of giants [Thor] made a visit to the mound of Griotun. The son of lord drove to the game of iron [battle] and the moon's way [sky] thundered beneath him. Wrath swelled in Meili's brother [Thor].

All the hawks' sanctuaries [skies] found themselves burning because of Ull's stepfather, and the ground all low was battered with hail, when the goats drew the temple-power [Thor] of the easy-chariot forward to the encounter with Hrungrnir. Svolnir's widow [lord, earth] practically split apart.

Baldr's brother [Thor] did not spare there the greedy enemy of men [Hrungrnir]. Mountains shook and rocks smashed; heaven above burned. I have heard that the watcher [Hrungrnir] of the dark bone [rock] of the land [sea] of Haki's carriages [ships] moved violently in opposition when he saw his warlike slayer.

Swiftly flew the pale ring-ice [shield] beneath the soles of the rock-guarder [giant]. The bonds [gods] caused this, the ladies of the fray [valkyries] wished it. The rock-gentleman [giant] did not have to wait long after that for a swift blow from the tough multitude-smashing friend [Thor] of hammer-face-troll [Miollnir].

The life-spoiler of Beli's bale-troops [giants] made the bear [giant] of the noisy storms' secret refuge [mountain fastnesses] fall on the shield-islet. There sank down the gully-land

[mountain] prince [giant] before the tough hammer and the rock-Dane-breaker [Thor] forced back the mighty defiant one.

And the hard fragment of the whetstone of the visitor [giant] of the woman of Vingnir's people [the race of giants] whizzed at ground's [earth, lord's] son into his brain-ridge, so that the steel-pumice [whetstone] still stuck in Odin's boy's skull, stood there spattered with Eindridi's [Thor's] blood.

Until ale-Gefiun [Groa] began to enchant the red boaster of being rust's bale [whetstone] from the inclined slopes of the wound-giving god's hair. Clearly I see these deeds on Geitir's fence [the shield]. I received the border's moving cliff [shield] decorated with horrors from Thorleif.

Then Ægir said: 'Hrungrnir seems to me to have been very mighty. Did Thor achieve any greater exploit in his dealings with trolls?'

Then Bragi replied: 'The story of how Thor went to Geirrod's courts is worth detailed treatment. On that occasion he did not have the hammer Miollnir or the girdle of might or the iron gauntlets, and that was Loki's doing. He went with him, for it had befallen Loki, having gone flying once for fun with Frigg's falcon form, that out of curiosity he had flown into Geirrod's courts and saw there a great hall, and he alighted and looked in through the window. But Geirrod looked out at him and ordered that the bird should be caught and brought to him. The person sent got with difficulty up on to the wall of the hall, it was so high; Loki was pleased that it caused him trouble to get at him, and planned to delay flying up until the man had performed the whole of the difficult climb. But when the fellow came at him, he beat his wings and jumped hard upwards, and found his feet were stuck. Loki was captured there and brought to giant Geirrod. And when he saw his eyes, he had a feeling it must be a person and demanded that he answer him, but Loki remained silent. Then Geirrod locked Loki in a chest and starved him there for three months. And when Geirrod took him out and demanded that he speak, Loki said who he was, and to redeem his life he swore Geirrod oaths that he would get Thor to come to Geirrod's courts without