



Legend 4: Thor's super-hammer goes missing

Do you own something that's really, really special to you? Something that you think of as your most treasured possession and just wouldn't dream of ever parting company with? It could be something as simple as a battered old pair of trainers that you've had for ages ... or as cool (and useful!) as a mountain bike or new super-computer. Have you ever wondered how you'd feel if this most treasured possession suddenly disappeared? You'd probably feel just like the missing item, i.e. absolutely *lost!* ... maybe even devastated! In at number four in our top ten chart is the legend that tells how the Norse god, Thor, lost a great treasure, and the adventures and scrapes he got himself into trying to get it back. And it was absolutely *essential* for him to retrieve it – if he didn't, the entire world would be beset by all kinds of dreadful problems ... including a rather unpleasant and inconvenient everlasting winter! Although this is a legend that's thousands of years old we've brought it up to date a bit. Those Vikings may have been a bloodthirsty lot – but in many ways they

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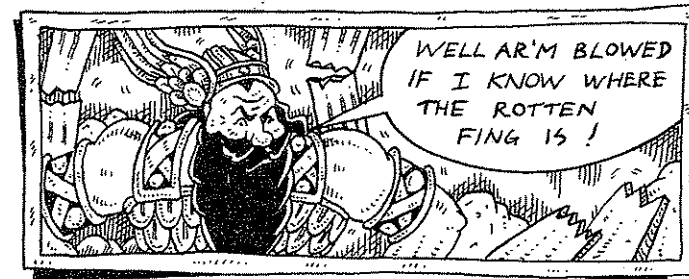
were quite similar to people living in the late twentieth century ... and they definitely had a sense of humour!



One morning Thor, the great Norse God of thunder, fighting and general all round thuggishness, awoke to find that something very dear to him had disappeared from under his very nose.

"Oh no!!" cried Thor, leaping from his bed, "Someone's only gone and nicked me bloomin' 'ammer!"

He immediately began rampaging around his house in a frantic search for the missing hammer. After demolishing several walls, ripping apart every scatter cushion he could lay his enormous hairy hands on *and* reducing his Scandinavian pine kitchen units to matchwood with his bare teeth, he still couldn't find his beloved hammer. (As you may well have guessed by now, cool, calm logical thinking and painstaking searches weren't Thor's strong points.)



Ignoring the pathetic bleats of his beloved goats, Toothgnasher and Toothgrinder, Thor picked up their breakfast barrel, emptied it into his cavernous mouth, swallowed the lot, belched thunderously, then stormed out into the garden for a good sulk. At that moment, Loki, the god of mischief, happened to pass by.

"Mornin' Thor, me old mate!" he said, as he watched Thor fling his best war chariot into the next door neighbour's fishpond, "Got the miseries 'ave we ... or are you just 'avin' a bit of a tidy up?"

"No ... I've gone and lost me blitherin' 'ammer," Thor mumbled into his huge red beard.

"Oooh, there's no need to get your magic belt in a twist over *that!*" laughed Loki. "I'm forever losing tools and things. Just go and buy yourself a new one!"

"Listen, Loki!" thundered Thor (as only he knew how), "I'm not talking hammers for puttin' up shelves ... or even hammers for knockin' sense into gods of mischief! I'm talkin' hammers made from meteorites by mysterious dwarves deep in the bowels of the earth. You know, *magic* hammers for beating the living daylights out of monsters and giants, and hurling half way across the world and saving whole kingdoms from evil enemies – not to mention the ravages of ice and frost and snow!" He paused for a moment then proudly added, "As only I know how!!"

Loki went pale. "You don't mean ... you don't think that someone's *stolen* Mjollnir, your *super-hammer*, do you!?" he whispered anxiously.

"Yes," said Thor, "Exactly!"



After he'd taken in the terrible news of the loss of Thor's magic hammer, Loki thought for a while, then he said, "Well, you know who'll have nicked it, don't you? It'll be one of those pesky frost giants from that cursed frozen land of Jotunheim. Those big bullies would nick the breath from their own grannies if you gave them half the chance!"

A glimmer of understanding caused Thor's huge, red eyebrows to quiver with excitement. "Of course, it would be them!" he exclaimed, "Why didn't I think of that?"

"Because you're as thick as two planks!" Loki explained helpfully.

"What did you say!?" rumbled Thor.

"I said, 'I think it's one of their pranks'," said Loki.

"I think you're right," agreed Thor.

"Well," said Loki, "I'll tell you what I'll do, Thor. As I haven't got much on today, I'll just turn meself into a bird and have a flutter over the giants' land and see what I can find out."

"Ooh, ta ever so, Loki," said Thor gratefully.

"OK. Must fly – see ya later, giant-hater!" said Loki, and went off to turn himself into a bird.

"Sometimes that Loki's a real treasure!" said Thor to himself.



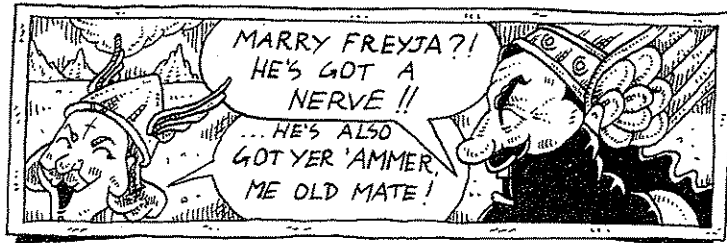
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Loki was back in what seemed like no time at all. Thor stopped twiddling his beard and looked curiously at the little bird that had just landed at his feet.

"I was right!" chirruped the bird, hopping excitedly from one foot to the other.

"Stone the crows – a talkin' bird!" gasped Thor.

"No, it's not a talkin' bird, you great big bonehead – it's me, Loki!" squeaked the bird, "Hang on a mo' – I'll just turn meself back into a god!" In a flurry of feathers and shower of breadcrumbs, Loki was his old god-like self again. "I was right," he continued, "Thrym, the giant King of Jotunheim has stolen your hammer and he says he won't give it back unless Freyja agrees to marry him."



This wasn't in the least bit surprising to either Thor or Loki. Thrym the Giant had fancied Freyja for absolutely ages – and after all, she was the Norse goddess of love *and* mind bogglingly beautiful! The two gods immediately rushed round to her house to ask her if she fancied marrying Thrym.

"You must be joking!" said Freyja. "I wouldn't marry that overgrown apology for an ogre for all the reindeer cutlets in Asgard. He's got a face like a wart hog's widdler and all the sex appeal of a sack full of recently strangled ferrets ... and more to the point ... I'm already married! So bog off, both of you!"

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And with that she caught Loki with a powerful left hook that sent him and Thor tumbling through the doorway of her palace.



"Charming behaviour for the goddess of love ... I'm sure!" said Loki as he picked bits of broken teeth out of Freyja's front door mat.

"No spirit of of adventure ... that's her trouble!" said Thor.

"There's only one thing for it, Thor, me old mate!" said Loki, "You'll just have to pretend to be Freyja!"

"What!" said Thor, turning as pink as a Scandinavian sunset, "I can't do that! I haven't got any ... err, you know..."

"Ruby red lips?" suggested Loki.

"Exactly!" said Thor. "Or any..."

"Golden curls?"

"Them as well!"



"No problem, big buddy," said Loki, "We'll give you an all-over makeover! You'd be amazed at the tricks they get up to nowadays with lip-sticks, pan-sticks and ready-mix! And in the meantime we'll let Thrym know that we agree to the terms of his ransome. Your ... sorry ... Freyja's, hand in marriage for the return of Mjollnir."

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One hour later, Thor – one of the toughest, roughest, all fighting, all action, no nonsense Norse gods ever – was looking absolutely stunning in a tartan mini skirt, skin-tight taffeta tank-top and stiletto heeled, seal-skin, sling-backs.



"I feel like a right big elf's blouse, I do," Thor grumbled to Loki as he caught sight of his fox-fur false eyelashes in the mirror. "Do I *have* to do this?"

"Remember little Mjollnir!" said Loki.

"Ay, less of the little!" muttered Thor, "That's no ordinary hammer you're talking about!"

Later that same afternoon the two gods were making their way up the steep mountain track that led to Thrym's massive black castle and Thor was casting furtive glances at Loki's purple velvet maxi dress and rat-skin ankle boots.

"I don't feel half so silly now you're wearing that sappy maidservant's outfit," he whispered, as they approached the oak door of the giant's stronghold.

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"A brilliant finishing touch you must agree, Thor ... er I mean ... *Madam!*" squeaked Loki from beneath his lamb's wool shawl. Then he added in a whisper, "Now listen, Thunderguts! When we get to Thrym's place don't forget to act like a love goddess and not like a polar bear in a penguin pond ... OK?"

"OK," muttered Thor, somewhat sulkily.

At that moment the huge castle door opened to reveal Thrym himself. It was obvious that the giant king was completely nuts about Freyja. As soon as he set eyes on his bride-to-be he blushed a deep shade of pink and began blowing her kisses from the tips of his fencepost-sized fingers.



"Oh no!" muttered Thor, "Just look at him! What in Asgard have I gone and got myself into?"

"He's barmy about you!" whispered Loki. "Look, you can see the stars in his eyes! Hmmm ... I wonder if he's a good snogger?"



By the time they reached him, Thrym had completely overcome his shyness and without a moment's hesitation he threw his arms around Thor and smothered him in wet, slobbery kisses.

"Oh my god!" groaned Thor, twisting and turning in an attempt to escape the giant's passionate embrace.

"Oh my ... goddess!" gasped Thrym, holding Thor at arms length so he could admire the radiant beauty of the love of his life! "Welcome, Freyja, my little passion flower," he crooned. "Greetings my fragrant little honey

bunch. Follow me ... the wedding feast awaits!"

Thrym led Thor and Loki into a vast hall that was absolutely packed to the rafters with laughing, feasting giants. As they entered they were greeted by enthusiastic cheering and several shouts of "Wow, what a cracker!" and "It's not fair, Thrym gets all the best birds!"



"Shall we begin my dear?" said Thrym, as soon as they were seated "I suppose you're feeling quite peckish after your journey?"

"Not half!" squeaked Thor "I'm absolutely *starving!*"

One whole roast ox and eight grilled salmon later Thor downed the last of his third barrellful of mead, wiped his lips on the back of his sleeve, patted his stomach, then let rip with a botty belch so loud and earth-shattering it actually made some of the older giants think the hall was being invaded by a whale which had recently swallowed a boat load of baked beans. They all stopped eating and looked in amazement at the "goddess of love" – who was now contentedly picking her teeth with an enormous hunting knife.

It was obvious that the giants were beginning to have their doubts about this beautiful "woman" ... especially Thrym! Loki noticed that the giant king had been looking at Thor rather curiously for some time and he

decided that some sort of distraction (preferably followed by some drastic action) was needed, so he quickly said, "Excuse me your Hugeness, don't you think that this is the appropriate moment to present the wedding gift?"

"Yes, yes ... why not?" agreed Thrym absentmindedly, and waved over a couple of servants who'd been waiting in a corner of the great hall.

Thor's eyes lit up when he saw that they were carrying his beloved Mjollnir. "And now my dear," said Thrym, taking Mjollnir from the servants and presenting it to Thor. "Here is my wedding gift to you and all your family."

"Right! Let him have it!" yelled Loki. "It's now or never!"



"But I am letting him have—" Thrym began to say but he never managed to finish his sentence because Thor leapt up from the table, snatched Mjollnir from his hands and floored him with a devastating blow to his enormous head.

The next few minutes were a blur of action in which Thor, high heels, mini skirt and all, raced around the hall toppling giants like skyscrapers in an earthquake. They didn't stand a chance! Loki did think about

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joining in the fun but by the time he'd picked up a giant-sized serving spoon to dish out a bit of grief of his own there wasn't much left for him to do. Thor and his formidable superhammer, Mjollnir, had struck again and again and the hall was strewn with dozens of moaning, groaning giants.



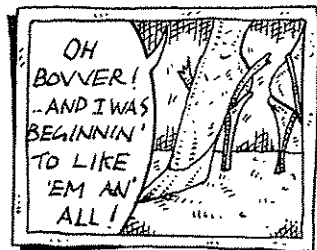
"Well!" said Loki, as he and Thor staggered triumphantly out of Thrym's castle. "That'll certainly make them think twice next time they're planning to pinch other folks' magic weapons!"

Thor didn't seem to hear him as he was busy looking down at his feet.

"Oh, just look at *that!*" he said impatiently. "Would you *believe* it!?"

"Would I believe *what!*?" said Loki, suddenly alarmed.

"That!" cried Thor irritably, pointing to his feet. "I've only gone and snapped one of the straps on me best pair of sling-backs!"



Top Facts 4: Thor

1 His status Thor was one of the top three Norse gods. The rough, tough Viking warriors and seafarers absolutely worshipped him because he was a god after their own heart, i.e. the sort of god who bashed first and asked questions afterwards (but only if he could manage to think of any!). Many of the legends about Thor describe him making short work of the sort of things that made everyday life very, very difficult for the average Viking ... things like huge wolves, enormous hostile seas and icebergs the size of Mexico (caused by the frost giants of course) – not to mention axe-wielding barbarians!

