

Play

How Thor Got His Hammer



by Nomi J. Waldman
illustrated by Amanda Harvey

Read to Find Out

Why do you think the author chose to tell this story as a play?

STRATEGIES & SKILLS AT A GLANCE

Comprehension

- Strategy: Evaluate
- Skill: Evaluate Author's Purpose

Vocabulary

- appreciation, burden, educate, merchandise, riverbank, treasurer, unfortunate, wares

Vocabulary Strategy

- Analogies: Relationships

Word count: 2,377

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CHARACTERS

Thor, Norse god of thunder and lightning

Sif, Thor's wife

Loki, trickster, troublemaker, and shape shifter

Elf 1, son of Ivaldi the blacksmith

Elf 2, son of Ivaldi the blacksmith

Sindri, an elf

Brok, an elf

Odin, chief of the gods

Frey, god of agriculture

Act 1

Loki Goes Too Far

Scene 1

A room in Asgard, home of the gods. The first scene is done in pantomime. A couch stands in the center of the set, with various chairs and other props scattered around. Sif enters, yawning and stretching. She walks over to the couch and lies down on it, her back to the audience and her long golden hair draped behind her.

A moment later Loki enters, glancing quickly at Sif as he passes her. Then he stops and gives the audience a wicked grin. Pulling out a pair of scissors, he displays them to the audience. Then he tiptoes over to Sif and, with his back to the audience, snips off her hair. He holds it up to show the audience, still grinning, and exits on tiptoe with the hair. After a moment, Sif turns over, sits up, and stretches. As she does, she touches her hair, realizes it has been cut off, and exits crying.

Scene 2

Thor enters, dragging Loki along with him. Thor is holding Sif's hair in his other hand. He stops center stage and shakes the hair in Loki's face.



Thor: Look what you've done, Loki, you wicked trickster! How dare you cut off my wife's beautiful hair?

Loki: I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, Thor. I . . . I just thought it would be funny for Sif to wake up and find her hair gone. Really, the scissors almost seemed to take over my hand and make me do it!

Thor: I don't want to hear any excuses! Sif is crying her eyes out, and you think it's funny! Do you know how long it took for her hair to grow that long?

Loki: I'll get the hair back for Sif, I promise I will. I'll find her some hair that's even more beautiful. In fact . . . in fact, I'll find her hair that's spun out of real gold.

Thor: You're going to find hair spun out of real gold? Is this another one of your tricks, Loki?

Loki: No, Thor, I mean it. I promise you, I'll do it.

Thor: *(finally letting Loki go)* You'd better keep that promise, Loki. Because if you don't, you'll be sorry. *(He storms out of the room.)*



Loki: *(sinking to the floor)* Oh, now what can I do? *(He shakes his head.)* Why did I have to get the god of thunder and lightning mad at me? I've got to think . . . all right, I promised I'd get real golden hair. I'll go across the river to Nidavellir, the home of those master blacksmiths, the elves. *(He jumps up and exits.)*

Scene 3

The cave of Ivaldi the blacksmith in Nidavellir, above the riverbank. The river flows swiftly past. Two elves, the sons of Ivaldi, are each hammering a piece of metal. They put down their hammers when Loki enters.

Elf 1: Well, brother, look who's here. Can you believe your eyes?

Elf 2: The question is, why is he here?

Loki: I'm here because even in Asgard Ivaldi and his sons are known for their beautiful wares. *(The elves bow their thanks for the compliment.)* I've come to commission something for Sif, the wife of the god of thunder and lightning. I want you to make something very special for her.

Elf 1: Just tell us what she desires, and we'll be honored to craft it for her.

Loki: Well, it seems that, uh, something has happened to her long golden hair, and Thor desires to replace it with hair spun out of real gold. Is it too great a burden?

Elf 2: No, my brother and I happily accept this commission. Tomorrow we will have Sif's hair ready for you.

*Loki nods and exits on one side.
The two then exit
the other way.*



Act 2

No Greater Gifts?

Scene 1

A day later in the cave of Ivaldi, the elves carry in boxes with their finished work. Loki enters from the other side.

Dwarf 1: *(holding up the golden hair)* Here it is, and you will have to admit that it is grander than any hair either human or god could grow.

Loki: *(taking the hair)* I lack the words to describe it—exquisite, marvelous, fantastic—they hardly do it justice.

Elf 2: Thank you, and just to show our appreciation for the opportunity to serve Asgard, we have some gifts we'd like to give the gods.

Elf 1: *(holding up a small ship of gold)* This is a ship of gold for Frey, the god of agriculture. The ship will take Frey anywhere he wants to go, because it can produce its own breeze. And it can carry as many sailors as Frey needs.

Elf 2: On land, Frey can simply fold the ship and place it in his pocket. And this, *(he holds up a golden spear)* is a spear for Odin, chief of the gods. This is no ordinary spear, for it will always hit its target. Nothing can stop it.

Loki nods his thanks and exits with all the gifts.



Scene 2

Loki: *(outside a different cave)* Well, I did very well with the sons of Ivaldi, didn't I? But why should I stop there? Here is the cave of Sindri and Brok, who are also master craftsmen. It would be most unfortunate if I passed up the chance to have them create even more gifts for the gods. More gifts will surely help me return to their good graces. *(He enters the cave.)* Greetings, Sindri and Brok! How goes it?

Sindri, Brok: Greetings, Loki.

Loki: I couldn't pass by without sharing these wonders with you. Look, these are the gifts that the sons of Ivaldi made for the gods. *(He passes around the gifts one by one as the elves nod.)* Each one is a marvel in itself that simply cannot be matched. Don't you agree?



Sindri: *(as Brok nods)* I'm sure we could produce even more magnificent gifts.

Loki: *(shaking his head in doubt)* Maybe, but I'll bet my head that you cannot surpass this merchandise.

Brok: Loki, you are really willing to wager your own head?

Loki: Yes, I really am—on one condition, though. If I lose the bet, you may cut off my head—as long as you don't harm any other part of my body.

Sindri: We agree. Let's consider it a bet then.

Brok: We'll begin work on it now. *(The elves turn their backs on Loki and begin their preparations.)*

Loki: *(He smiles, picks up his burden, and goes outside.)* I'm not through with Sindri and Brok, I can assure you. For a shape shifter am I, and I'll return to them as a biting fly. *(He exits.)*

Act 3

The Fire Gets Hotter

Scene 1

The cave of Sindri and Brok, who are working at the furnace. They take turns pumping up the fire with a bellows and firing the gifts. However, whenever one of them is working with the gold or silver, there is a loud buzzing sound as Loki, now in the form of a biting fly, tries to interfere with their work.

Brok: *(to Sindri, who is pumping the bellows)* Good, Sindri, just keep the fire hot as I draw out this gold piece. If it cools even a little, I'll lose the shape. *(Brok goes through the motions of drawing something out of the furnace with large tongs, then nearly drops the object as Loki stings him on the back of one hand.)*



Brok: Ouch! That pesky fly just bit me! *(He puts his hand to his mouth but holds onto the tongs with the other.)*

Sindri: Be careful, Brok, don't drop the tongs!

Brok: There's nothing to worry about, Sindri, I'm holding onto them. Look at this—a boar made of gold. Do you see the details, all the way to its mane and bristles? Let's see someone match this boar! *(Brok sets it down, takes the bellows from Sindri, and pumps them as Sindri puts another object into the furnace.)*

Sindri: All right, then, we'll soon have a golden arm-ring better than anything anyone has ever seen! *(As Sindri draws out the object, Loki stings him on the neck.)*

Sindri: Ouch—that fly just bit me, too! *(He slaps at the fly but manages to hold on to the tongs and sets the object down.)* There, now isn't that the most handsome arm-ring you've ever seen?

Brok: Indeed, your golden arm-ring is absolutely matchless. When Odin sees your work, he'll have no trouble deciding what it's worth.

Sindri: *(wiping his brow)* All right, now I'll put the silver hammer in the furnace, and we'll be done. Keep pumping, Brok. *(Sindri puts a silver object in the furnace as Brok pumps the bellows. Just then Loki stings Sindri on his eyelid.)*

Sindri: Ouch, my eye, my eye! I'm going to kill that fly if it's the last thing I do!

Brok: Steady, Sindri, steady—don't drop the hammer.

Sindri: *(He holds his eye shut but manages to remove the object from the furnace without dropping it.)* I'd like to smash that fly with it, but I won't. When Thor sees his new silver hammer, he'll have no choice but to proclaim us the winners.



Brok: And then we'll take care of the loser of this wager—poor Loki! How's he going to look without his head? *(Brok and Sindri laugh.)*

Loki enters as himself, and he doesn't look too happy.

Brok: Ah, we were just speaking about you, Loki. Sindri and I have completed our work. And to make sure these gifts reach Asgard safely, I'm going to help you carry them, and I will present our gifts myself. Unfortunately, Sindri will have to remain behind to tend to his eye. It's strange, for we've never been bothered by stinging flies before.

Sindri: You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?

Loki: *(rather crankily)* No, so why do you even bother to mention it to me? We'd better be on our way. The gods are not known for their patience.

Brok: Who would know that better than the one who has tried their patience more than anyone else? I'm surprised they haven't punished you for your tricks long before this. *(He and Loki gather up all the gifts and exit.)*

Act 4

The Judgment Falls

Scene 1

The council room of the gods in Asgard. Loki and Brok enter with the gifts and bow separately to each god who is there—Thor, Sif, Frey, and Odin. After each gift is presented, the gods pass it around and exclaim over it.

Odin: Since Sif is the injured party here, first show us her present. What do you have for her that replaces what you robbed her of?

Loki: Here is the golden hair spun by the sons of Ivaldi. It is guaranteed to begin to grow like ivy on the vine as soon as you put it on your head, Sif. *(He gives it to Sif.)*

Loki: As I promised, it is even more wonderful than your own beautiful hair, Sif. And this golden spear is a gift to Odin. *(He gives the spear to Odin.)* You can be assured that this spear will never miss its target. And finally this is the gift from Ivaldi's sons to Frey. *(He hands the golden ship to Frey.)* Small as it may seem now, you have but to command it. Not only will this ship be able to hold any number of sailors, but it can carry them to any part of the world, because it can produce its own breeze.

Frey: *(taking the boat)* And a wonderful thing it is, too. It will allow me to watch over my fields wherever in the world they may be.

Odin: Well, then, Brok, your gifts must be marvelous indeed if they are to surpass these.

Brok: I believe our gifts are, Odin. Here is another gift for Frey—a golden boar. But this is no ordinary boar because it can fly through the air faster than any horse can run. *(Brok hands the golden boar to Frey.)*



Brok: Wherever this golden boar goes, it will brighten the sky like the blaze of the sun at noon. Now, this arm-ring is for Odin. *(Brok hands the arm-ring to Odin.)* Every ninth night, eight more rings of the same kind will drop from it. Your treasurer will surely have to work hard to keep track of the golden rings!

And now, for what may be the finest work that Sindri and I have ever completed. *(Brok presents the silver hammer to Thor.)* This hammer will never miss its target, Thor, and it will always return to your hand. No matter how hard you strike the hammer, you cannot damage the metal or the shape of it.



Thor: That indeed is a most wonderful gift, Brok, for I can use it to defend Asgard.

Odin: I would say that as wonderful as the gifts from Ivaldi's sons are, those from Brok and Sindri are indeed the best. So, Loki, it seems that you have lost your bet and must pay the price. Say good-bye to your silly head.

Brok: *(moving toward Loki)* Now it's time for me to collect on our wager.

Loki: *(calmly)* Yes, you can cut off my head, but remember that you cannot harm any other part of my body—and that includes my neck.

Brok: But that's impossible! I can't cut off your head without touching your neck!

Odin: *(laughing)* Well, Brok, you have allowed Loki to educate you on why he is known as a clever trickster. Still, we must thank you for these wonderful gifts. And, yes, we must thank Loki also. For despite all the trouble he causes, he makes up for much of it with the gifts he brings us.

Loki makes an exaggerated bow, first to the gods and then to the audience.

Comprehension Check

Summarize

Use an Author's Purpose Chart to help you retell *How Thor Got His Hammer*. What was the author's purpose in writing this story? Use your information in the chart to support your answer.

Clues	Author's Purpose

Think and Compare

1. Reread page 12. How does the author show that Loki is a trickster? (**Evaluate Author's Purpose**)
2. Many stories from around the world use tricksters as main characters. Why are tricksters good problem-solvers? Use the text to explain your answer. (**Synthesize**)
3. Think of a story you have read in which a character saves his or her own life with a clever trick. How is the character like Loki? How is the character different? (**Evaluate**)

Literacy Activities



Write a Scene

What do you think Brok told Sindri when he got back to Nidavellir? Write the scene as you think it would have unfolded. Use the same format as this play.



Create a Character Analogy

Analogies are fun to create, and they can tell a lot about a character in a few words. Here's an example of an analogy.

A warrior is to a sword as a trickster is to a joke.

Think about the characters in the play, and create analogies to tell about them.

How Thor Got His Hammer

The trickster Loki often gets others in trouble. Somehow, though, he usually gets away with it. But what happens when Loki risks his own neck?



5.4 Week 5

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