

Loki

An extract from *Norse Mythology* by Neil Gaiman

Loki is very handsome. He is plausible, convincing, likeable, and far and away the most wily, subtle and shrewd of all the inhabitants of Asgard. It is a pity, then, that there is so much darkness inside him: so much anger, so much envy, so much lust.

Loki is the son of Laufey, who was also known as Nal, or needle, because she was slim and beautiful and sharp. His father was said to be Farbauti, a giant; his name means “he who strikes dangerous blows,” and Farbauti was as dangerous as his name.

Loki walks in the sky with shoes that fly, and he can transform his shape so he looks like other people, or change into animal form, but his real weapon is his mind. Not even Odin is as cunning as Loki.

Loki is Odin’s blood brother. The other gods do not know when Odin came to Asgard, or how. He is Thor’s friend and Thor’s betrayer. He is tolerated by the gods, perhaps because his stratagems and plans save them as often as they get them into trouble.

Loki makes the world more interesting but less safe. He is the father of monsters, the author of woes, the sly god.

Loki drinks too much, and he cannot guard his words or his thoughts or his deeds when he drinks. Loki and his children will be there for Ragnarok, the end of everything, and it will not be on the side of the gods of Asgard that they will fight.

