

Thor and the Midgard Serpent

An Ancient Norse Myth



MIDGARD SERPENT

The serpent Jormungand was called the **Midgard Serpent** because she grew so quickly that she encircled the earth (or **Midgard**). She lay in the ocean with her tail in her mouth. Sailors were frightened to set sail as the movement of her coils churned the waves so much that they feared being drowned in the terrible seas.

The Midgard serpent was also the greatest enemy of the mighty god **Thor**. One day Thor disguised himself as a young boy and went to pay a visit to a giant called Hymir who lived by the sea. They decided to go fishing and Thor, still in disguise, asked the giant what bait to bring. The giant

replied that he should go and find his own bait.

At this Thor went over to one of the giant's bulls and casually wrenched off its head and threw it into the bottom of the boat. Then he took the oars and started rowing out to sea. Hymir was impressed, and a little frightened. When they reached the giant's usual place for fishing Hymir asked Thor to stop. But Thor ignored him and continued rowing until he reached the edge of the world. Here Hymir pleaded with him to stop, as he was scared in case they might meet the Midgard Serpent.

But Thor rowed on until he was sure they would find the serpent. Then he fixed the bull's head to a line and dropped it over the side. As the serpent passed and took the bait into her mouth, Thor felt the line jerk. He summoned all his strength and pulled. A furious battle took place with Thor and the serpent struggling to overcome each other.

The giant was terrified by the serpent and by water rushing into the boat. As Thor raised his hammer to end the struggle, Hymir reached across and cut the line, allowing the exhausted serpent to slide back beneath the water.

In fury Thor turned to the giant and knocked him overboard where he drowned. From that time on the Midgard serpent took care to hide in the deep water where Thor might not find her. Many years later Thor finally killed the serpent on the day of Ragnarok, a battle to end all battles. However Thor himself also died on this day.



THOR