

## Lokasenna

Prose version by Tim Morris (2020),  
adapted from the translation by Henry Adams Bellows.

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Ægir held a beer party for the gods. This was after he had got the mighty kettle, in that other story. Odin and his wife Frigg came to the party. Thor didn't; he was on a journey in the East. Sif, Thor's wife, was there, and Brag, with his wife Ithun. Tyr was there. Tyr had only one hand; the wolf Fenrir had bitten off his other hand. Njorth and his wife Skathi were there; Freyr and Freyja; and Víthar, the son of Odin. Loki was there, and Freyr's servants Byggvir and Beyla. Many gods and elves were present.

Ægir had two serving-men, Fimafeng and Eldir. The place was lit with gleaming gold, not firelight. The beer simply appeared; nobody served it. Things were very peaceful. The guests praised the skills of Ægir's serving-men. Loki got irritated, and killed Fimafeng. The gods shook their shields and howled at Loki and drove him away to the forest. Then they started drinking again. Loki turned back. Outside he met Eldir. The conversation went like this:

Loki: Don't go a step further, Eldir. Tell me something. What are the sons of the glorious gods taking about over their beer?

Eldir: The sons of the glorious gods are talking about their weapons and telling war stories. You're not going to find many friends among the gods and elves here.

Loki: I think I'll go into Ægir's hall. I'd like to take a look at this party. I hate the gods. I want to mix some poison into their mead.

Eldir: If you go into to Ægir's hall to get a look at the party, and start talking trash to the gods, you have to prepare yourself for some payback.

Loki: Well, Eldir, if we get into an insult contest it's just going to encourage me.

Then Loki went into the hall, and everyone fell silent.

Loki: I'm here! I'm thirsty! I'm Loki! I've come a long way to ask you all for a drink of mead. Why are you sitting there silent, all stuck up, Gods? No conversation for me? Set a place at the table for me, or tell me to leave.

Bragi: The gods aren't going to let you sit with them anymore. You're not the kind of person they want at their events.

Loki: Odin! Remember years ago, when we were blood brothers? You took an oath never to drink beer unless I could be there to drink it too.

Odin: Let this wolf's father sit down. I don't want Loki speaking insults here in Ægir's hall.

Then Vithar rose and poured Loki a drink for. But before Loki drank, he spoke to the gods:

Loki: Hail, gods! Hail goddesses! Hail the whole holy crowd! Except for Bragi, sitting on that bench over there.

Bragi: I will give you a horse, and a sword from my hoard, and a ring too, provided you don't stir up the gods to hatred. Just don't rouse their anger.

Loki: Well, you're never exactly going to be loaded down with horses and rings, Bragi. You're the biggest coward here, counting men and elves together, and the most likely to duck when somebody shoots arrows at you.

Bragi: If you and I were outside right now, instead of here in Ægir's hall, I would cut off your head and tote it away for telling lies like that.

Loki: Sure, Bragi, as if you'd done anything in your career as a bench ornament. You can try fighting me if you're that angry. A real hero would.

Ithun: Bragi, think of Loki's connections. He is Odin's adopted son. Do not speak so spitefully here in Ægir's hall.

Loki: Shut up, Ithun. You're the horniest woman here. You wrapped your delicate arms around the guy who killed your own brother.

Ithun: I'm not going to insult you, Loki, here in Ægir's hall. I'm just trying to calm Bragi down. He is mad drunk. I don't want any fighting to break out.

Gefjun: Why are you gods bitterly trying to stir up hatred? Loki is famous for cruelly mocking everybody, and he hates the whole population of heaven.

Loki: Be quiet, Gefjun! I know who corrupted you. A pretty boy gave you a necklace, and you spread your legs for him.

Odin: Loki, you are insane, and stupid too, trying to make Gefjun angry like that. She sees what this is all going to lead to. I think I do, too.

Loki: Be quiet, Odin. You fix the outcomes of fights between humans. And not even fairly. You usually let some undeserving person win the prize.

Odin: Yes, maybe I did let some undeserving person win the prize. But you spent eight years on Earth as a dairymaid, milking cows. And you gave birth to children. Some man you are.

Loki: They say that you used to go among humans casting spells like a witch, and you used to dress like a witch, too. Some man you are.

Frigg: You two should be quiet about all the things you used to do back in the day.

Loki: Quiet, Frigg. You're Odin's wife, but you're always on the prowl. You slept with Odin's brothers Vili and Ve.

Frigg: If a son like Baldur were here with me now in Ægir's hall, you would not leave the presence of the gods without trying your skill in battle.

Loki: So, Frigg, you do want me to tell old stories. Because I'm the reason you don't see Baldur around the hall anymore.

Freyja: You are mad, Loki, to noise your shame about. Frigg knows everything that happened, even if she doesn't talk about it.

Loki: Be silent, Freyja! I know all about you. You're no saint, either. Every god and elf in this hall has had sex with you.

Freyja: That's a lie, and evil too, and you will pay the price: the gods and goddesses are angry, and you will go home in grief.

Loki: Be silent, Freyja! You're a sinful witch. You used to have sex with your own brother, and fart the whole time, too.

Njorth: Well, it doesn't do much harm for a married woman to take a lover. But to see an effeminate god in the hall, when he's even borne children ...

Loki: Shut up, Njorth. You were once a hostage for the gods. Plus the daughters of Hymir used to pee into your mouth.

Njorth: It was a great honor to me to a hostage for the gods. I have a son honored by everyone, and foremost among the gods.

Loki: Watch what you're saying, Njorth. I'm going to reveal something: you fathered that son on your own sister. And you've done worse.

Tyr: Freyr is the best hero in the home of the gods. He does no harm to maidens or married women. He sets people free.

Loki: Be quiet, Tyr! You've never been able to mediate between two men. I'd like to tell people how Fenrir once tore your right hand off.

Tyr: Yes, I lost a hand. You lost your son Hrothvitnir. We're both upset. That wolf is in chains, waiting for the twilight of the gods.

Loki: Shut up, Tyr. Be silent, Tyr! I fathered a son on your wife. And you got nothing out of it: no compensation, no revenge.

Freyr: The wolf will remain by the mouth of the river till the death of the gods. And if you don't be quiet, you sower of dissension, you will be chained up, too.

Loki: You had to pay Gymir's daughter to get her to sleep with you. And you sold your sword, too. So when the fire-dwellers come riding through Mirkwood, you won't have any weapon to fight them with.

Byggvir: If I had distinguished enough birth and high enough office, I would take this evil talker and smash his body to pieces.

Loki: Who's this little vermin, snuffling and snapping around? All you do is speak harm to Freyr or work at menial tasks.

Byggvir: I am Byggvir. Gods and men alike say that I'm pretty spry. And I'm proud to be here drinking ale with everybody.

Loki: Shut up then, Byggvir! You don't know how to serve meat to men properly. Whenever there's a battle, they find you hiding in the straw on the floor.

Heimdall: Loki, you're drunk. Why don't you stop all this? When people drink way too much, they never give their words any thought.

Loki: Quiet, Heimdall! Your fate is long since sealed. You have to stand stockstill in one place, as the watchman of heaven.

Skathi: You're having fun, Loki, but you might not have license to do it much longer. The gods will soon tie you up on the rocks with the bowels of your own dead son.

Loki: Even if they tie me up on the rocks with the bowels of my own dead son, I was still the first and last standing in the fight when we caught Thjazi.

Skathi: Even if you were the first and last standing in the fight when they caught Thjazi, you will never hear a welcome from any houses or fields that I own.

Loki: You used to speak sweeter when you were trying to get me into bed. My side of that story will come out too, if you go listing my sins.

Then Sif came forward and poured a crystal cup of mead for Loki, and said:

Sif: Hail, Loki! Have a crystal cup of aged mead. For, you know, I am the one god you can say nothing bad about.

Loki picked up the cup, drank, and said:

Loki: You would indeed be unique if you kept away from men like that. But I do know one man who could get you out of Thor's arms.

Beyla: I hear the mountains shaking. Thor will be here soon. He will silence the fellow who slanders gods and men alike.

Loki: Be quiet, Beyla! You are Byggvir's wife, and a great sinner. I can't think of a filthier, more shameful presence among the gods.

Then Thor arrived.

Thor: Shut up. You are no man. Mjollnir the hammer will shut your mouth for you. I'll strike your "shoulder-cliff" from your neck, and your life will be over.

Loki: Ooh, the son of Earth. Why so menacing, Thor? You're not going to be so fierce the day the wolf comes and devours your father.

Thor: Shut up. You are no man. Mjollnir the hammer will shut your mouth for you. I will throw you far away into the East, and nobody will catch sight of you any more.

Loki: Oh, I remember last time you headed eastward. You got scared and had to hide in the thumb of Skrymir's glove. You forgot you even were Thor.

Thor: Shut up. You are no man. Mjollnir the hammer will shut your mouth for you. I'll take the hammer that killed Hrungrnir in my right hand, and smash all your bones to pieces with it.

Loki: I'm going to live a long time yet, if that hammer is the worst thing you can threaten me with. I remember when you were fainting with hunger, and you couldn't even untie the straps of Skrymir's satchel.

Thor: Shut up. You are no man. Mjollnir the hammer will shut your mouth for you. The hammer that killed Hrungrnir will send you down to death and hell.

Loki: I've told the gods all the things I had on my mind. But now that you're here, Thor, I'll stop. You're pretty tough after all. Ægir, you brew good ale, but this will be the last of your get-togethers. This entire hall is going to go up in flames.

And after that Loki took the form of a salmon and hid in Franang's waterfall. The gods captured him there. They tied him up with the bowels of his son Vali, but his son Narfi was changed to a wolf. Skathi took a poison-snake and fastened it up over Loki's face, so that the poison dripped into his face. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a shell under the poison, but when the shell was full she took it away, and the poison dropped onto Loki. Then he struggled so hard that the whole earth shook. That is what you call an earthquake.