



Ymir's Sacrifice

In the beginning there was nothing. No heaven, no earth, no stars, no life. There was only Ginnungagap the great abyss of nothing. Beside Ginnungagap (some say in the north although directions were probably meaningless at this time) lay Niflheim, a place made of ice and fog. Opposite to Niflheim lay Muspelheim the place of fire and heat. Inside Ginnungagap they came together, the fire melted the ice and out of the water and the steam the giant Ymir was created.

From his ankles and armpits the first frost giants were born.

As more of the ice melted an enormous cow named Audumla appeared and fed Ymir with her milk. When Audumla licked on salty chunks of ice another being came into existence – his hair first, then the head and finally the whole body of the god Buri.

He had a son named Burr who married the giantess Bestla. They had three sons together – Vili, Ve and Odin whose destiny it was to destroy and to create. All three wandered through the fogs of Niflheim and the fires of Muspelheim but they were not satisfied with the half-chaos they found. They wanted more. They wanted order and structure where now only chaotic randomness raged.

So the three brothers found Ymir and despite his enormous size and strength they slew him in a bitter fight. It is written that out of Ymir's wounds there flowed so much blood that it flooded everything that was and created an ocean of blood.

All of Ymir's giants children drowned in that ocean with the exception of Bergelmir and his wife who escaped the flooding of blood and became the parents of a new race of giants.

Those new giants later dwelled in Joetunheim and they remembered the slaying of Ymir and their ancestors, becoming mortal enemies of Loki and the deities that came after him or from him.

Out of Ymir's huge body Odin created the universe and the nine worlds. He created the sea and the rivers and lakes out of Ymir's blood. The trees were made out of his hair, the mountains out of his bones, the rocks and stones out of his teeth. His skull became the sky that Odin populated with sparks from Muspelheim's fire to create the stars. Ymir's brain became the first clouds. Odin then created Midgard and surrounded it with a wall made of Ymir's eyelashes.

But his work was far from done. And a pattern was set – a dark fate if you want - that Odin would again and again sacrifice others for his great dream of creation.