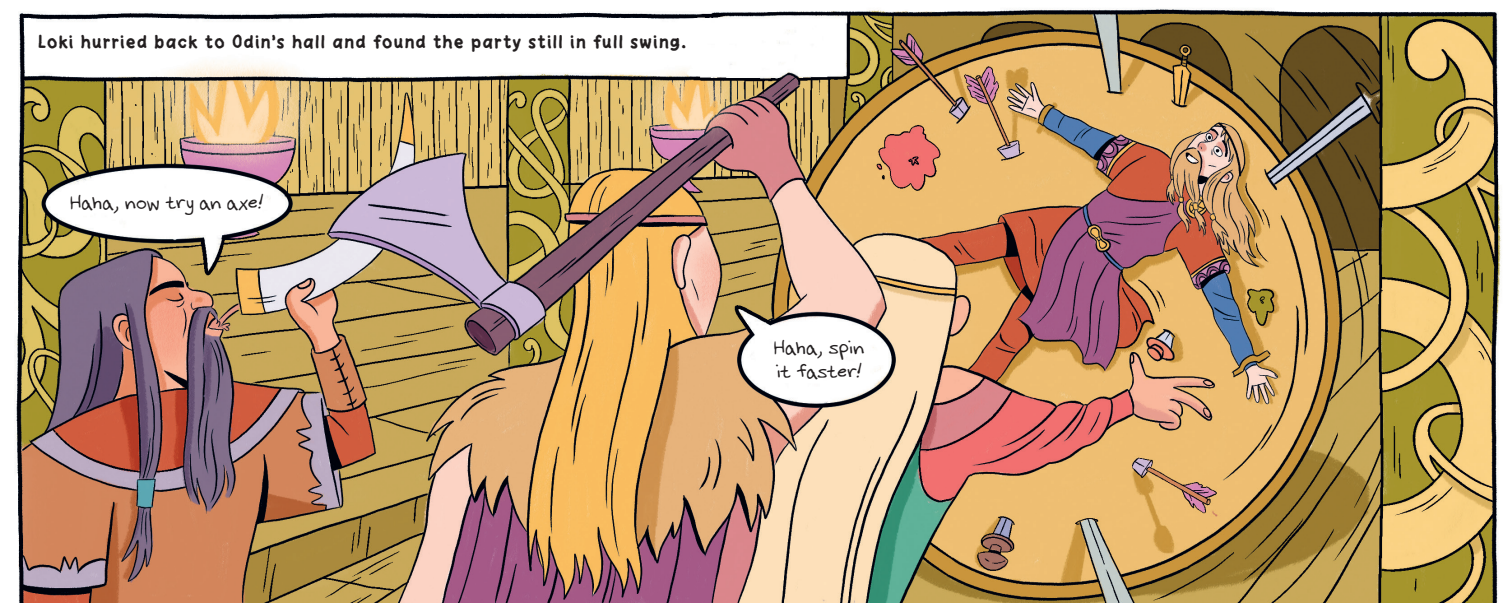
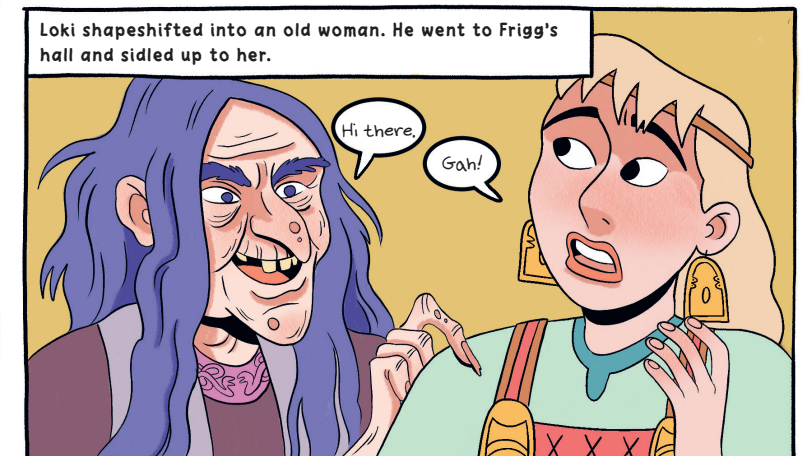
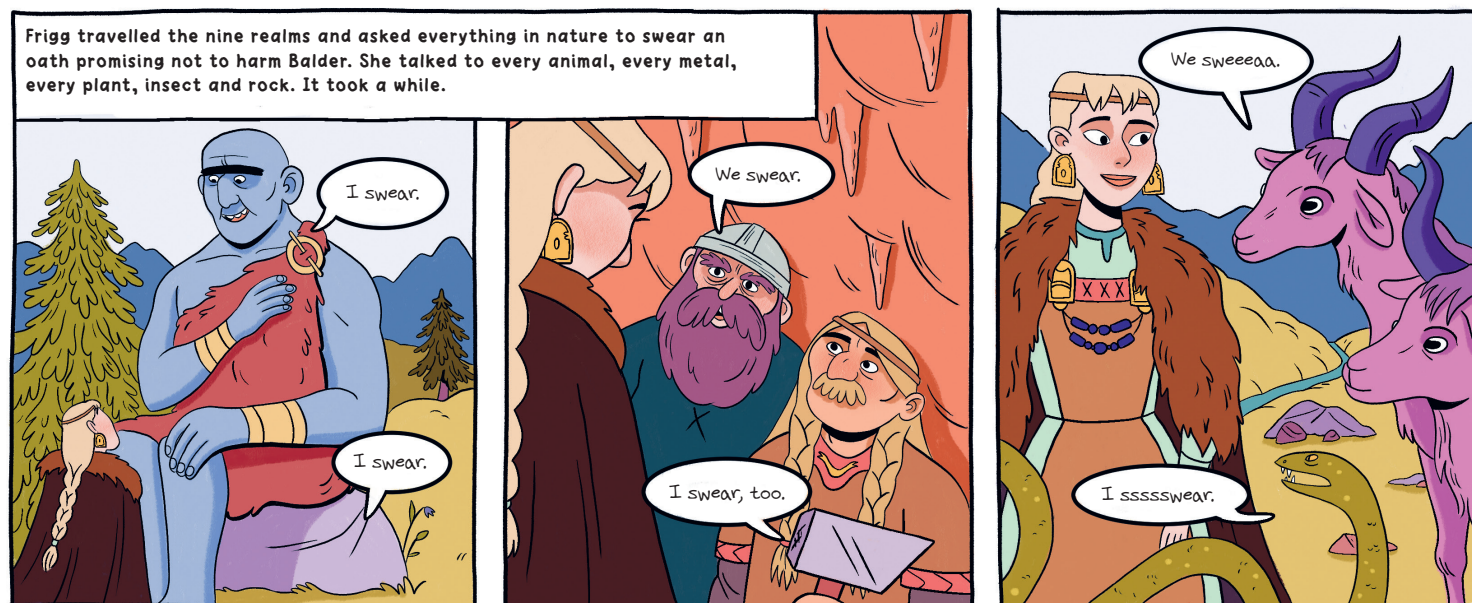
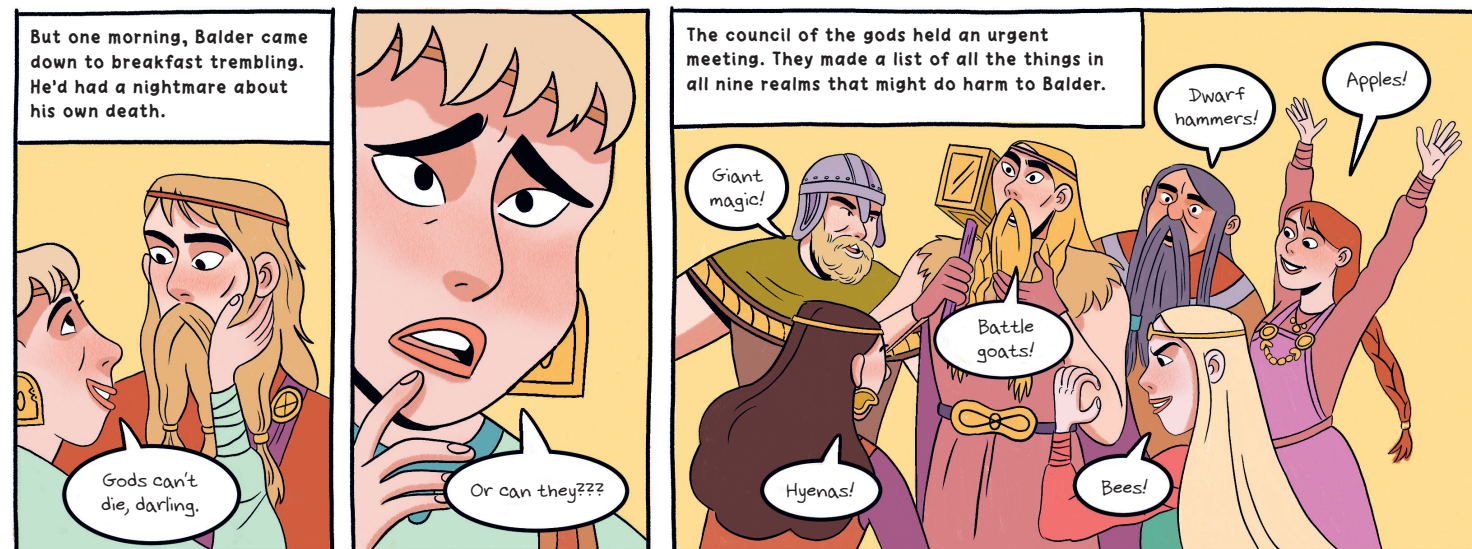
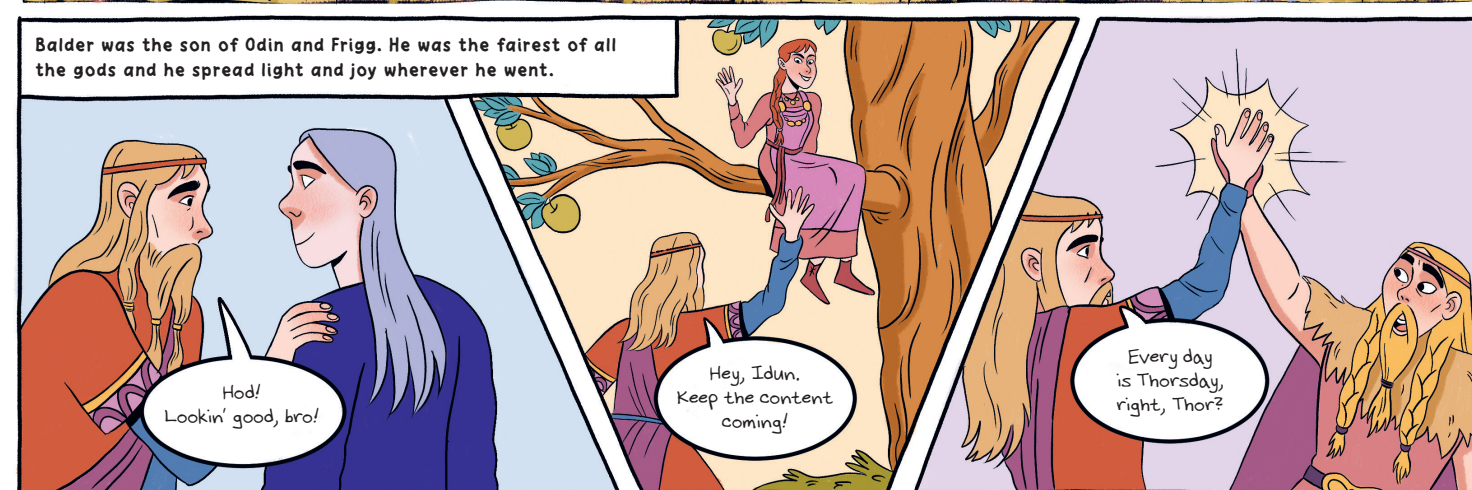


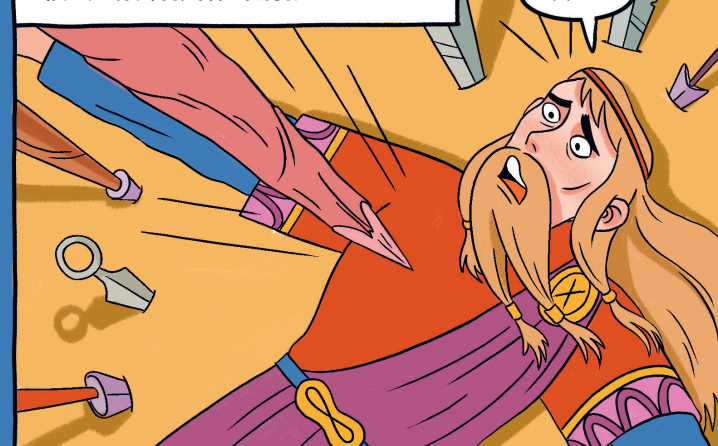
THE DEATH OF BALDER



When the blind god Hod was asked to throw something at Balder, at first he said no.



Unlike the spears and arrows, the mistletoe dart did not veer off course.



Loki slipped the mistletoe dart into Hod's hand, and guided Hod's arm to throw it hard and fast.



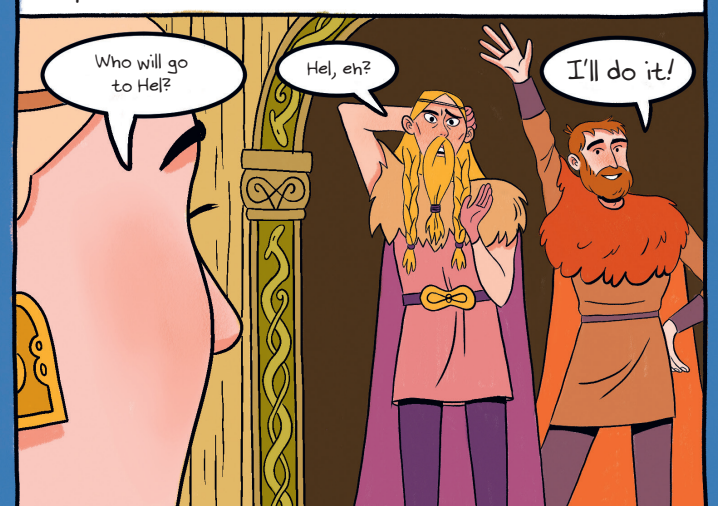
And, unlike the apples and stones, the dart did not bounce off Balder's godly protection. Instead, it pierced his heart.



The brilliant Balder was dead. His once bright light had been snuffed out. The assembly soon realised who was to blame. But the evil mastermind had already slipped away.



Frigg rose to her feet with fire in her eyes. She declared that one of the gods should go and see Hel, Mistress of the Dead, and plead with her for the return of Balder.



Hermud, Odin's son, was strong of arm and fleet of foot. He leapt onto Sleipnir's back and galloped off across the Bifrost bridge.



The gods built a funeral pyre in Balder's ship, Ringhorn. They wept and waved goodbye as it drifted out onto the water.



The only god not at Balder's funeral was Hermud. He was still galloping towards Hel, through gloomy mountain passes and pitch-black valleys.



After nine nights of non-stop galloping, Hermud reached the bridge across the river Gjoll. A hooded sentry blocked his path.



Modgud hesitated. The Land of the Dead was for the dead, but Hermud was alive. In the end, though, she let him pass.



In one mighty bound, Sleipnir jumped over the iron gates of Eljundir.

