



1. Introduction

Whenever humans in the Land of the Midnight Sun sacrificed to Odin, he sent his two ravens, Hugin and Munin, off to see what was happening. The two birds flew far and wide to fulfill their master's wishes.

Once - in southern Norway - they saw smoke rising from the sacrificial fires in Styrbjorn's village. Suddenly a cry rang out, "Aasa has given birth to a son!"

People rushed out of their houses and gathered in a crowd outside the Chieftain's house—the home of Styrbjorn and Aasa.

The ravens heard how happy and excited everybody was with the news. And they watched as torches were lit, and listened as people excitedly spoke of how Styrbjorn would react to the wonderful news. They supposed he was on his way back from his journey to the land of the Danes.

The birth of the Chieftain's son was a cause for celebration. Aasa had been with child several times, but had miscarried every time. It had been suggested in low whispers that Styrbjorn ought to take a new wife, and some of the widows and young girls even held secret hopes.

Hugin and Munin returned to Odin and—sitting on his shoulders—told him what they had seen and heard. Deep in thought, Odin stroked his beard and smiled mysteriously.

Throughout the years that followed, Odin frequently sent his ravens to check on Styrbjorn's village. Once they returned with the news that Aasa had given birth to twins. The town's happiness was short lived, however, as the babies died soon afterwards.

Meanwhile their son, Hauge, grew up to be strong like his father and wise like his mother.

He will certainly need both those qualities, Odin said to himself.





2. The Escape

“Run, Hauge! Run!”

Suddenly, all Hauge hears is his father’s voice; it drowns out the screams, the clashing of swords, and the roar of the fires from the torched houses. Haakon Gilmarsson and his men have attacked the village. Momentarily, Hauge sees the fear in his father’s eyes and understands; this is not a request.

Under cover of the smoke and confusion, Hauge flees the village and the rampaging enemies. He runs, not noticing the ground under his feet, the trees, and bushes he passes, nor the streams he crosses. Suddenly, a large branch stops his flight and all becomes still and dark.

He comes to; someone is tickling his forehead. “Go away! Don’t! Stop it!” he mumbles, still half dazed. He waves his hand, irritated, but the tickling continues. When he opens his eyes he has to smile, in spite of the pain in his head. Leaves, from the branch he ran into, brushes against his face. However, his smile fades quickly as his mind clears.



This year two odd-looking visitors had arrived too. They were wearing strange long, brown robes and came on foot, each with a long walking stick and a carpetbag. The eldest, Peter, told them that his God had sent him as an emissary. It was a strange God, unknown to Hauge, who generally thought he knew all the Gods. But then, this God seemed to be a bit peculiar, and very different from the Gods he knew about.

Apparently, Styrbjorn thought this new God a bit strange too, because he had argued with Peter.

“God will punish you, Styrbjorn!” Peter said.

Styrbjorn replied scornfully, “Just one?” Styrbjorn mocked, “I have many more than that: Odin and Thor, Tyr, Njord, Freyr, and Freya! Are you really saying there is only one God? Nonsense, I never heard anything so ridiculous in all my life.”

Shortly after that, Peter hurried off to find his young apprentice, Hannibal.

Strange name, Hauge thought, but then again, they were both from a distant foreign land, far away on the other side of the sea.

The God’s punishment? There was no way Peter could have known that Haakon Gilmarsson was about to attack them, was there?

Haakon Gilmarsson was a neighbouring Chieftain from up north. A feud had been going on between the two families for ages; however, no one recalls why or when it started

4. The Spring Feast

At nightfall, the men gathered around long tables set up in the Long House and cups were passed around. The strong mead made them loud and talkative, and the night was filled with strange and hilarious sounds.

To escape the noise and commotion, Hauge wandered off into the darkness. Behind the Long House he'd stumbled over something or someone. It was Hannibal; lying there with one of the village girls. The girl had blushed and rushed away, but Hannibal, although flustered and embarrassed, began talking to him.

He told Hauge of his long journey and life with the very strict Peter, whom he called "Master" and "Priest." Hauge asked Hannibal how old he was.

"Eighteen," he replied. He had followed Peter for the past two years. He also spoke of the new God they had come to teach about. In the hope that they could make people in Norway believe in this one God, they had even learnt their strange and foreign language.

"It is really difficult to learn," Hannibal said.

Hauge liked the funny sing song way in which Hannibal spoke his language.

Hannibal also showed him the strange cross he wore under his robe. It was shiny and had a fine, intricate design engraved on it.