



THE FATHER OF LIES CHRONICLES  
BY ALAN EARLY

## ABOUT THE BOOKS

### Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent

Something wicked has been awoken under the earth...

With his Dad starting work on the new Metro tunnel, Arthur is forced to move to Dublin. While exploring a hidden underground river, Arthur and his new friends Will and Ash find a mysterious pendent. It glows in the gloom of the river and depicts a monstrous snake strangling the trunk of a tree. They soon work out that the pendent is a warning, a sign that something evil is waiting underneath the city. Something that's been imprisoned for a thousand years, something left by the Vikings, something that can – and will - destroy first the city, then the world

What did the Vikings hide under Dublin and why did they leave it there? Who is the dark man that spies on Arthur and what is his evil plan? This hair-raising fantasy adventure will have you thrilled to the end, as only Arthur and his friends can save the world from the dreaded World Serpent.

*Shortlisted in the Bord Gais Energy Irish Book Awards for Best Children's Book, Senior 'Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent' has been described by Eoin Colfer, author of Artemis Fowl as 'a brilliant creation... fast-paced and thrilling' and by Image Magazine as 'an exciting fantasy novel. The book is the first of a trilogy and a thrilling read for anyone 8+!*

### Arthur Quinn and the Fenris Wolf

Life is finally back to normal for Arthur Quinn...

Three months ago, he and his friends almost died stopping the Trickster God Loki from destroying the world. But just when Arthur is starting to relax again, the dreams start once more; dreams of gods, dreams of war, dreams of wolves. It can mean only one thing.

Loki is back.

Who is the Fenris Wolf of Arthur's visions? Can he trust his two odd new classmates? And what's in the National Museum that Loki is so desperate to get at? Mysteries and questions arise as, once again, it's down to Arthur Quinn, his friends and a dead Viking to save the world.

But what they don't know is that this time, Loki has help...

### Arthur Quinn and Hell's Keeper

Arthur Quinn has defeated the World Serpent. He's come face-to-face with the Fenris Wolf. But now he faces Loki's most powerful child, Hell's Keeper.

With his friends Ash, Ellie and Ex, Arthur sets out to stop this new menace. But Loki has a trick up his sleeve, a trick that changes everything. Arthur must confront Loki for a final showdown.

But faced with a terrible secret and enemies at every turn, can Arthur find the courage he needs to defeat the god once and for all, or has Loki finally won?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Early was born in Leitrim, Ireland and now lives in Dublin, in the sometimes-posh and leafy suburb of Ranelagh. He studied in the National Film School, Dun Laoghaire. Upon graduation in 2008, he co-founded Annville Films. From an early age he would write and illustrate short stories about Banshees and ghost animals and whatever else struck his imagination. His first attempt at writing a novel was while he was still at school and was about, amongst other things, a telepathic fish. When he was about ten, he visited Dublinia, a recreated Viking village and so began an interest in Viking lore that inspired the critically acclaimed 'Father of Lies' trilogy. His first book in the series, 'Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent' was released in 2011 and has been described by Eoin Colfer as 'a brilliant creation' and was also shortlisted in the 2011 Bord Gais Energy Irish Book Awards. He is currently working on a few new 'top secret' projects.

He likes books that have pages made of paper and also a beginning, middle and end. He dislikes writing biographies about himself in the third person.

He's a picky eater but, despite that, quite like raisins.

## ABOUT THE WEBSITE

The Arthur Quinn website ([www.arthurquinn.ie](http://www.arthurquinn.ie)) is the best possible resource to find activities in conjunction with the book. There, you will find a Fact Versus Fiction page, detailing the actual historical truths and real places that inspired Arthur Quinn. There is a large selection of videos and trailers to give classes a further experience of the books. Pupils can also submit their own art or view galleries from other schools, as well as downloading free wallpapers, screensavers and playing online games and quizzes.

## SCHOOL VISITS

*Alan is always delighted to be invited to speak in schools. If you want him to visit your school, library or book club, send a message to [odin@arthurquinn.ie](mailto:odin@arthurquinn.ie) and he'll get back to you.*

*Be sure to give some details about the group, including ages and numbers.*

### The visit itself

Generally these last anywhere between 40 and 60 minutes. I can work shorter/longer sessions.

The format can change but usually includes a reading or two from my latest book, some story-creating games with the group and a Q&A session. (If a group has a lot of questions, the session can sometimes run over so it's best to let me know in advance.)

I'll also talk a bit about how I write and how I come up with my stories - (although these usually come up a lot during the Q&A also.)

I'm happy to sign any books/postcards/bookmarks/scraps of paper that the group has afterwards. If you want to buy books in bulk for the session, you could order through your local bookshop (I'm sure they'll be only delighted!) or directly through Mercier Press.

If I need anything special for the visit, I'll let you know in advance. But generally all I require is a glass of water.

### A few things to keep in mind

I'm flexible with group size (ask me!) but I feel that groups of max 40 are more manageable.

As I said above, I'm happy to visit anywhere in the country but you should keep in mind that I don't drive so your school or library will need to be easily reachable by public transport.

If your group hasn't had the chance to read all of my book yet, don't worry! The sessions don't rely on a lot of knowledge of my writing. Although I do suggest that you encourage them to look through the website prior to my visit.

I can do a couple of different sessions for different ages. My normal visit is aimed at fourth to sixth class but I'm also happy to speak to first to transition years about the writing process.

I find it's a good idea to get the group to write down questions beforehand. It can be difficult to think of a question on the spot but once they start flowing, they won't stop.



## GAMES & ACTIVITIES

All the following games and activities are also available for download on the Arthur Quinn website. You will find even more free activities and downloads there.

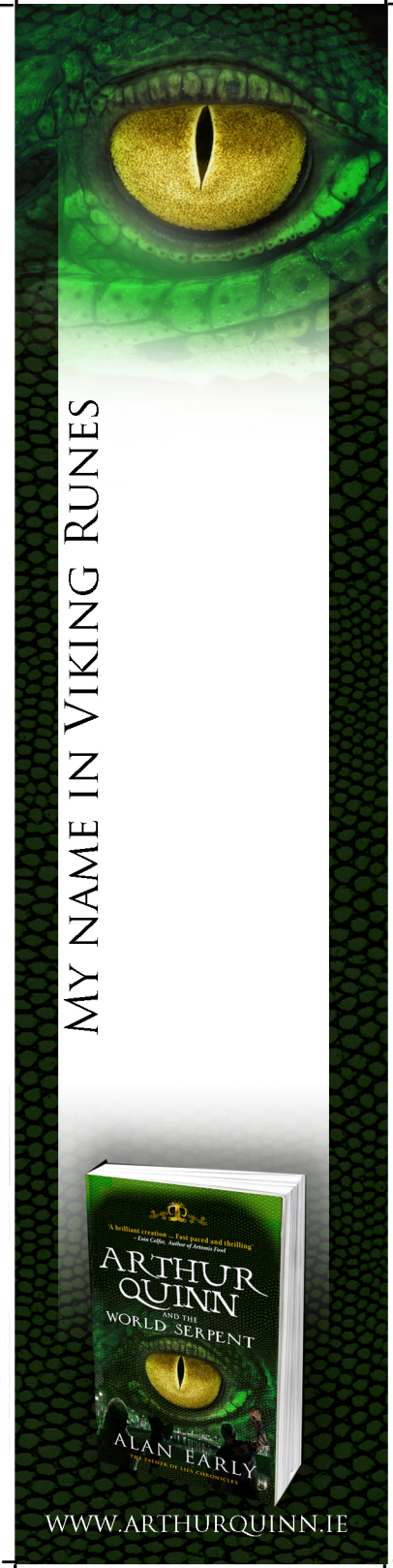
# MAKE YOUR OWN RUNE BOOKMARK



RUNES WERE AN ANCIENT ALPHABET USED IN VIKING TIMES. SOME SCHOLARS BELIEVE THEY HAD MAGICAL USES.

RUNES ARE USED THROUGHOUT THE FATHER OF LIES CHRONICLES, SO WHY NOT MAKE YOUR OWN RUNE BOOKMARK?!

1. SAVE THIS FILE AND PRINT IT OUT ON HEAVY PAPER OR CARD.
2. CAREFULLY CUT OUT THE BOOKMARK ON THE RIGHT. GET AN ADULT TO HELP IF YOU'RE UNSURE.
3. USING THE RUNE ALPHABET BELOW, FILL IN YOUR NAME IN THE WHITE SPACE GIVEN.
4. THAT'S IT! NOW PUT YOUR BOOKMARK IN YOUR COPY OF ARTHUR QUINN & THE WORLD SERPENT AND ENJOY!



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A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
ᚫ	ᚱ	ᚾ	ᚿ	ᚼ	ᚫ	ᚨ	ᚱ	ᚷ	ᚹ
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
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WWW.ARTHURQUINN.IE



ARTHUR  
QUINN  
AND THE  
FENRIS WOLF

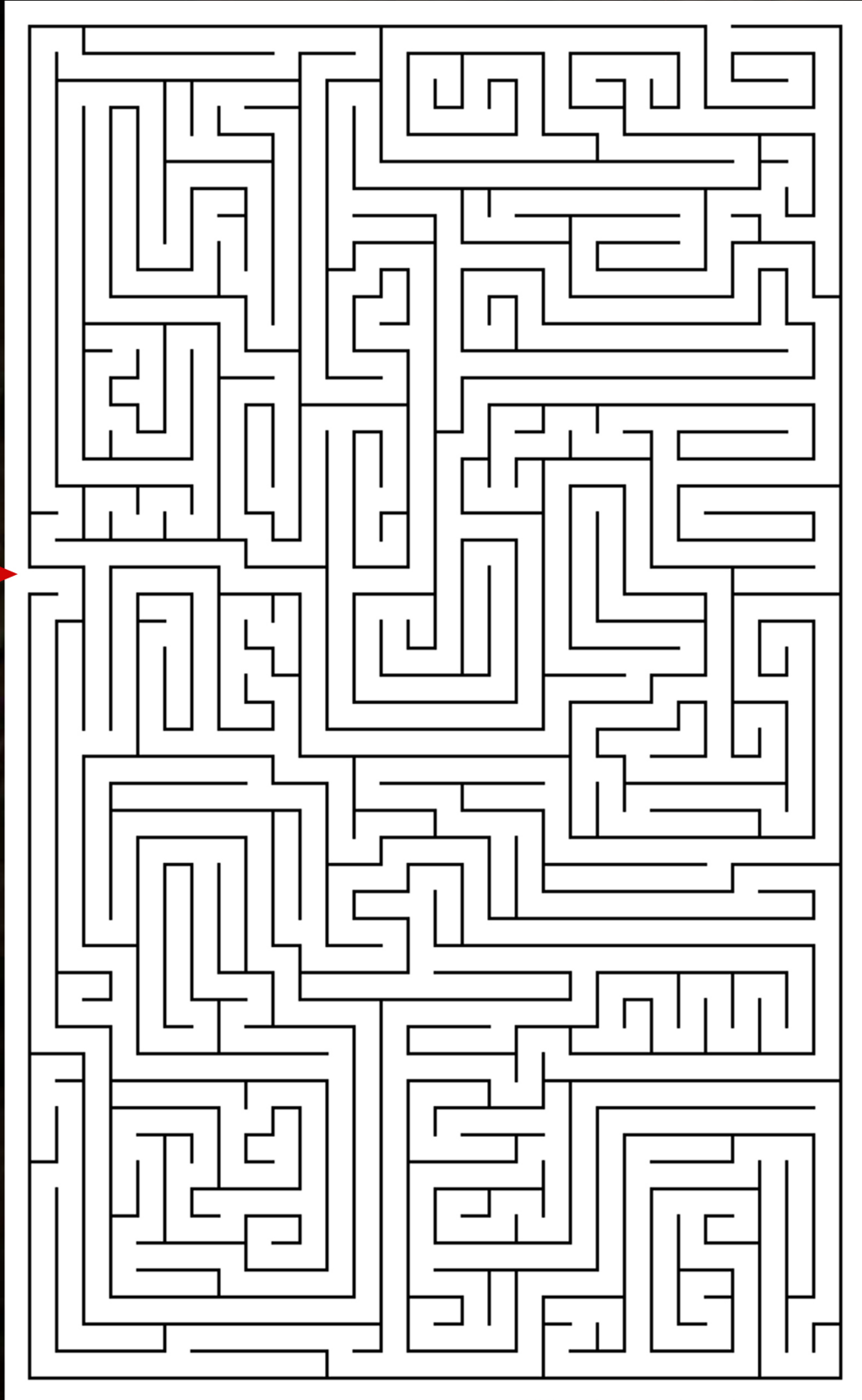
1. COLOUR IN
2. CAREFULLY CUT AROUND THE DOTTED LINES
3. CUT OUT THE EYES TO SEE
4. LOOP STRING OR ELASTIC THROUGH THE SMALL HOLES AT EITHER SIDE



# ARTHUR QUINN

AND THE  
WORLD SERPENT

FINISH



START

Arthur and his friends are trapped in the River Poddle tunnel.

Can you help them find their way out?  
Lead them through the maze to the  
finish.

# WORDSEARCH

S E O N R G S E N A L F X S B P I Z L L  
O E P R H L C X R A J V B I X S G O R R  
K G Z Q T K B E S Z U L F V A J K U R S  
G N A E Z E K H X H P A O G N I K I V A  
S V Y W T Z M P A C R U B B G P D X R N  
A F W P Q V G C Q T W O W B Y I T V D O  
M M Q M Q R N R H N R U I R Z H H K W P  
I P O J Y J D U T M P R G T E S J G I I  
P Q R L R A R Y G X G C P W C O Q G L L  
Q F U N B P U A F T U P H S R J B X L H  
B I N W J K O J Y O X O Z M F S N T U V  
R D V W H E S B E M E T U H H T F D C Y  
A H R V L T E H F U N N Z S U N M R C E  
Z N T X V S R W B A G Z Z R O E S A E M  
M Y U V K O R D E A S Z W P G P I G P A  
M N F G Y R L W N G F M R T P R S S L B  
O M G W F F X D T V B M G M Y E K A Q D  
O H L V X I R F O F J E N H S S E M U D  
Z R W L V B A L S K Z W L F R U D C R K  
Q D P J P O T K J O W Y L N I F O J T D

How many words from 'Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent' can you find?

Tick of the words below when you find them.

ARTHUR   
ASGARD   
ASH   
BIFROST   
JORMUNGAND   
LOKI   
METRO   
SERPENT   
VIKING   
WILL



TEAMWORK 25  
 CUNNING 24  
 COURAGE 42  
 INTELLIGENCE 76  
 FIGHT SKILLS 19

**ARTHUR QUINN**



TEAMWORK 25  
 CUNNING 26  
 COURAGE 44  
 INTELLIGENCE 85  
 FIGHT SKILLS 18

**ASH BARRY**



TEAMWORK 5  
 CUNNING 30  
 COURAGE 47  
 INTELLIGENCE 90  
 FIGHT SKILLS 19

**WILL DOYLE**




TEAMWORK 0  
 CUNNING 30  
 COURAGE 50  
 INTELLIGENCE 90  
 FIGHT SKILLS 25

**LOKI**



TEAMWORK 24  
 CUNNING 6  
 COURAGE 35  
 INTELLIGENCE 65  
 FIGHT SKILLS 10

**MAX BARRY**



TEAMWORK 14  
 CUNNING 9  
 COURAGE 41  
 INTELLIGENCE 79  
 FIGHT SKILLS 10

**JOE QUINN**



TEAMWORK 16  
 CUNNING 30  
 COURAGE 47  
 INTELLIGENCE 100  
 FIGHT SKILLS 8

**ELLIE LAVENDER**



TEAMWORK 9  
 CUNNING 14  
 COURAGE 50  
 INTELLIGENCE 55  
 FIGHT SKILLS 25

**EX LAVENDER**



TEAMWORK 23  
 CUNNING 15  
 COURAGE 50  
 INTELLIGENCE 60  
 FIGHT SKILLS 25

**EIRIK**

1. Cut out the cards  
 2. Shuffle & deal to each player  
 3. Player One chooses a category from their topmost card and reads out its value. Each player then reads out the value of the same category from their top card. The largest value wins that round, and the winner takes the cards of the trick and places them at the bottom of their pile. The game continues until one player has won the whole pack.  
 4. In the event of a draw, the cards are placed in the center and a new category is chosen from the next card. The winner of that round obtains all of the cards in the center as well as the top card from each player.

CATEGORIES  
 Teamwork 25/25  
 Cunning 30/30  
 Courage 50/50  
 Intelligence 100/100  
 Fight Skills 25/25

**HOW TO PLAY**



TEAMWORK  
9

CUNNING  
23

COURAGE  
15

INTELLIGENCE  
81

FIGHT SKILLS  
24

**FENRIR**



TEAMWORK  
3


CUNNING  
30

COURAGE  
40

INTELLIGENCE  
67

FIGHT SKILLS  
7

**DRYSI**



TEAMWORK  
9

CUNNING  
6

COURAGE  
33

INTELLIGENCE  
70

FIGHT SKILLS  
4

**STACE BARRY**



TEAMWORK  
25

CUNNING  
17

COURAGE  
50

INTELLIGENCE  
75

FIGHT SKILLS  
22

**BJORN**



TEAMWORK  
18

CUNNING  
15

COURAGE  
42

INTELLIGENCE  
78

FIGHT SKILLS  
16

**DET. MORRISSEY**



TEAMWORK  
23

CUNNING  
7

COURAGE  
33

INTELLIGENCE  
82

FIGHT SKILLS  
2

**MISS KEEGAN**



TEAMWORK  
22

CUNNING  
20

COURAGE  
36

INTELLIGENCE  
84

FIGHT SKILLS  
6

**COUSIN MAGGIE**



TEAMWORK  
3

CUNNING  
30

COURAGE  
22

INTELLIGENCE  
64

FIGHT SKILLS  
8

**LUKE MORAN**



TEAMWORK  
19

CUNNING  
6

COURAGE  
22

INTELLIGENCE  
55

FIGHT SKILLS  
7

**RUAIRÍ**



TEAMWORK  
15

CUNNING  
12

COURAGE  
20

INTELLIGENCE  
65


FIGHT SKILLS  
5

**DEIRDRE**



TEAMWORK 3  
 CUNNING 30  
 COURAGE 17  
 INTELLIGENCE 89  
 FIGHT SKILLS 22

**HEL**



TEAMWORK 23  
 CUNNING 29  
 COURAGE 47  
 INTELLIGENCE 99  
 FIGHT SKILLS 19

**ODIN**



TEAMWORK 25  
 CUNNING 30  
 COURAGE 50  
 INTELLIGENCE 100  
 FIGHT SKILLS 12

**THE NORNS**



TEAMWORK 15  
 CUNNING 18  
 COURAGE 46  
 INTELLIGENCE 37  
 FIGHT SKILLS 20

**WOLFGUARD**



TEAMWORK 20  
 CUNNING 17  
 COURAGE 43  
 INTELLIGENCE 23  
 FIGHT SKILLS 23

**GUNNAR**



TEAMWORK 22  
 CUNNING 7  
 COURAGE 48  
 INTELLIGENCE 56  
 FIGHT SKILLS 23

**KNUT**



TEAMWORK 7  
 CUNNING 7  
 COURAGE 50  
 INTELLIGENCE 2  
 FIGHT SKILLS 25

**MAGNUS**



TEAMWORK 25  
 CUNNING 19  
 COURAGE 43  
 INTELLIGENCE 77  
 FIGHT SKILLS 18

**ORLA**



TEAMWORK 25  
 CUNNING 20  
 COURAGE 42  
 INTELLIGENCE 69  
 FIGHT SKILLS 18

**DONAL**



TEAMWORK 0  
 CUNNING 4  
 COURAGE 20  
 INTELLIGENCE 2  
 FIGHT SKILLS 25

**WORLD SERPENT**



OH LOKI NIGHT  
BY ALAN EARLY

A free and exclusive Arthur Quinn short story follows.

The story can be downloaded as a PDF or MOBI Kindle file from the Arthur Quinn website.

It's all about Loki and is set at Christmas, a few months after 'Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent' and just before book two, 'Arthur Quinn and the Fenris Wolf.'

It's advised that you read 'Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent' before reading this story.



# Oh Loki Night

A SHORT STORY



# ALAN EARLY

THE FATHER OF LIES CHRONICLES

# Intro

This story takes place a couple of months after the events of 'Arthur Quinn and the World Serpent' and just before the events of 'Arthur Quinn and the Fenris Wolf'. I hope you enjoy it!

Merry Christmas!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Quinn', written in a cursive style.

Loki was dead tired: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.

He'd been travelling for weeks now, ever since the defeat back in Dublin. (Although he didn't like the word "defeat". "Hiccup" seemed more apt.) Travelling and searching and hunting. But at this moment, the Norse god of mischief was weary and cold. In a word, irritable. His breaths puffed in front of his face and, as he crossed an icy field in the Irish country side – the grass crunching under his feet – he looked up at the clear skies. From the position of the stars and the rotation of the moon he could tell that it was near the Winter Solstice. The darkest days of the year, when man and god alike took a break from work; to be with family, to eat heavily and to be merry.

Loki could see a large house two fields over. Smoke was rising from a pair of chimneys and orange light flickering in one of the downstairs windows. The perfect place to rest up for a few hours. Not too long as he still had his mission to complete; but enough to warm his bones and fill his stomach. And so it was, on this 24<sup>th</sup> night of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, that the Father of Lies headed in the direction of a large, lone house.



Getting into the house was easy. The front doors swung inwards by themselves as Loki strode toward them. Once he was inside, they were even kind enough to shut softly behind him.

It was just as he'd hoped and expected inside. Even in the hallway, he could feel the warmth coming through a door at the end of the passageway. A set of stairs led to the second floor; to darkness and the sound of pair of snores. Loki ignored them and went straight for the warm door down the hall.

He found himself in a living room, with thick red carpeting and a matching sofa set. The coal embers in the hearth were still glowing orange, giving off a cosy warmth that flushed his cheeks almost instantly. Loki rushed to the fireplace, rubbed his numb fingers together vigorously over the heat and took in the rest of his new surroundings. The only other light source in the room confused him. There were little electric lights blinking and winking from where they were strung around a fir tree as tall as him. The red and green flashes were a pretty sight certainly, but an unusual one to Loki's eyes. Round ornaments and sparkly rope were also hanging from the branches and he was just starting to wonder what kind of person would erect a tree in their living room when he noticed something else weird.

There were lots of photographs of the same family hanging all around the room. Nothing strange there. Loki knew that humans liked to display pictures of their loved ones wherever they got a chance. But alongside those pictures were paintings, drawings and a few photos of the same man. These images were usually on rectangles of card, folded in half, and they depicted him in snowy scenes or with elves or in reindeer-drawn sleighs. He was an old man, grotesquely overweight, in a suit and hat as red as blood and with a beard as white as bone.

Whoever this man was, it was clear that the family must have loved him greatly. Or feared him terribly.

The yawn cut through Loki's thought process. It was a long and shuddering noise, the sound of someone waking up. And it was coming from behind the sofa.

A figure started crawling out from the space between the couch and the wall. As quick as he could, and with a flash of green light, Loki transformed into what he believed would be a familiar face for anyone living in that house.

'Santa?' said the boy who emerged from the crawl-space, blearily rubbing his eyes up at Loki.

'... Yes,' the god replied hesitantly. 'Yes, I'm... Santa. Who else would I be?!'

Loki guessed that the boy was about four years old. He was wearing stripy pyjamas, a pair of teddy-bear shaped slippers and a blue dressing gown. His blonde hair was all out of place; sticking up in tufts here, ironed flat there. The left side of his face was momentarily mottled red, where he'd been sleeping on the carpet and there were gaps in his smile where he'd recently lost some teeth.

'SANTA!' he exclaimed, racing forward and wrapping his arms around Loki's legs. The god tripped backwards on a rug and flumped heavily into one of the armchairs.

'Get off me!' Loki barked. The boy leaped away at the sound, his face reddening shamefully. He looked away from Loki-Claus, studying the rumpled rug at his feet.

'I'm sowwy, Santy,' he mumbled.

‘Yeah... Well, don’t do it again.’ Just then, Loki’s stomach growled loudly. The boy stared at the fat belly and his eyes lit up suddenly. He turned to the opposite armchair, picked something up and carefully carried it back to the god. Balancing the tray in his small fingers proved difficult and the glass of milk was sloshing over by the time Loki took it off him. Along with the drink was a plate with two slices of fruit cake, both topped with a generous layer of red marzipan.

The boy watched all the while – mouth half-open in awe – as Loki greedily wolfed down the cake. It was both sweet and aromatic and it left a pleasing spicy aftertaste as he licked his lips and picked at the crumbs on his red costume. He downed what had survived of the glass of milk in one go before slouching back in the armchair. He shut his eyes, sighed contentedly and patted his full belly. Just a few minutes, Loki told himself. And I’ll be on my way again. Back to my mission to find-

‘Santy...?’

Loki forced one eye open. The boy took another tentative step forward, fingers fidgeting before him.

‘What?’

‘I’ve been a good boy all year.’

‘Mmm-hmm.’ The god shut his eye again and turned around, snuggling deeper into the chair. After a moment; ‘Uh... Santy?’

‘What?!’ He shot up in the seat in frustration, eyelids flying open. ‘What is it now?’

‘Uh... I just...’

‘Spit it out, will you!’

‘I just wanted my pweasants.’

‘Pweasants?’

‘For being a good boy.’

‘I have to give you presents because you were good?’

The boy nodded bashfully.

Loki’s mouth slowly turned up in a pointed grin behind the white beard.

‘So the presents are a reward? For being a good boy?’

He nodded again.

‘Okay...’ Loki said slowly, getting to his feet. ‘I’ll give you exactly what you deserve for being good.’

‘YAY!’ The boy leaped up to give Loki a hug but the god managed to side-step any further unwanted contact. ‘I asked for twee pweasants. Is that alright, Santy?’

Loki examined a bauble on the tree that had an image of this Santa character on it. He turned back to the boy and gave him the cheeriest smile he could muster. ‘Of course it’s alright. What did you want first?’

‘A Mega CarTrax,’ said the boy, defiantly. When he noticed Loki’s confused expression, he picked up a toy catalogue from the coffee table next to the couch. He expertly flicked to the correct page and showed a mini race track to the god. The CarTrax was essentially a length of black track with two remote controlled cars that would speed around it. ‘I always wanted a Mega CarTrax, even before I was borned when I was in my Mammy’s tummy, I wanted one.’ He spoke in one constant, excited stream; barely giving pause to breathe. When he was done, Loki smiled wider and clicked his finger.

There was a puff of green smoke. When it dissipated, the CarTrax had appeared out of nowhere, arranged in one wide circuit around the base of the Christmas tree. The boy yelped in delight, collapsed to his knees and took up one of the remotes. As his car sped off around the track, he beamed up at Loki.

‘Thank you so much, Santy!’

‘You’re welcome,’ said Loki, spotting his chance for mischief. ‘Would you like it to go faster?’

‘Yes pwease!’

When he looked back at the track, the car was visibly quicker, hurtling around the track at such a rapid pace that the boy could feel the wind of it on his face. He eased his grip on the remote but the car didn’t slow down. In fact, it was getting faster.

The boy glanced up at the man in the red suit then back to the out-of-control race car. He couldn't see it anymore; it was just a greenish-blue blur circling and circling. The Christmas tree was trembling with the gusts from the car; baubles and lights were shook from their branches.

'Can you stop it?' the boy shuffled away from the track, looking to Loki for help. The god simply watched and smiled.

The tree was off the floor when the boy looked back, held aloft in a mini-tornado created by the hurtling car. The fairy lights had been yanked from the plug socket and were spinning in the vortex, along with the tree and a few smashed baubles. The whole lot tottered over and back in the air and the star on top of the tree scraped off the ceiling.

'Please!' begged the boy, pulling at Loki-Claus' coat. 'Please just stop it!' But the god kept watching the chaos gleefully.

Magazines and newspapers from the coffee table were being pulled into the tornado now and a few cushions were following suit. At this rate, the whole room would be sucked into the vortex in a couple of minutes.

But then, just as abruptly as it had begun, the car came to a complete stop. The tree and decorations clattered to the floor, the whole thing ruined.

Finally, Loki looked down at the boy calmly. 'What else did you want?'

'Huh?'

'What did you want for being good?'

'...Snow. I wanted it to snow for Chwistmas. But-'

He was cut off by the snowflake landing on his nose. A second drifted down in front of his vision, and a third, and a fourth. He stepped back from Loki and looked up at the ceiling. There were yellow-grey clouds there, dropping snow all over the room. It wasn't exactly what he'd imagined when he'd asked Santa for snow but it was so much better, so much more magical, so much more Christmassy.

The boy put out his arms, catching the light and powdery snowflakes in his hands. Most of them melted as soon as they touched his skin. But after a minute, the snowfall was getting heavier and there was a thin layer of white on the floor as well as every surface and every piece of furniture.

He giggled, fell to the carpet and splayed out his arms and legs to make a snow angel in his living room. In another minute, there'd probably be enough to make a snowman or to have a snowball fight. It was all so perfect and so beautiful that he barely noticed when it turned into a blizzard.

The wind started to rage first, sending chilling gusts around the whole room. This was followed by a heavier snowfall; some of the flakes were as large as two euro coins and they fell in such thick drifts that he could barely see a metre in front of his face. The snow on the floor was up to the boy's shins now, soaking into his slippers and freezing him to the core.

He pulled his dressing gown around him tighter to keep out the cold and stumbled around the living room blizzard, trying to spot Loki's red suit.

'Santy? Are you there? Santa!' He could barely hear his own voice over the sound of the gale so he didn't expect Santa Claus to but he kept calling out nonetheless. He had to fight against the gusts and drifts to make headway with every step. He was trembling by now, both with the cold and the fear that he would be lost here, in the living room.

And then, just like the car, as suddenly as the blizzard had begun, it stopped. The last flakes drifted to the ground like leaves in autumn and the red suited man loomed into his vision once more.

'What was the third thing you wanted?' Loki asked.

The shivering boy looked around him, at the wrecked Christmas tree, at the huge snow drifts that were already melting in the heat of the fire and leaving slushy puddles behind them. He turned back to Santa and said, 'I-I-I d-d-don't think I want a-a-anything else.'

'You've been so good all year though. You deserve a third present.'

'Weally?'

'Of course weally.' He leaned down so his face was in line with the boy's. 'Would I lie to you? Now, what would you like.'

The boy, still mildly trembling with the cold, stepped through the slush to retrieve his now-sodden toy catalogue. He turned to another page and handed it to Loki, pointing out what he wanted. It was an army action figure called Captain Pavlov, complete with M16 rifle, three grenades, twelve phrases and a parachute. (*Pavlov-Mobile sold separately, the advert proclaimed*).

Loki let the catalogue drop from his fingers. At the exact millisecond it touched the soaking floor, the window burst inward. Shards of glass flew everywhere as the man rolled through the air and landed in an awkward angle in front of the fireplace.

The new-comer stood up. He was as tall as Loki, but with a physique too muscular to exist in the real world. His shoulders were too broad, his arms too bulbous, his waist too small. He was wearing army fatigues, had grenades strapped to his chest and he held an M16 rifle between two veiny hands. He was also made entirely of plastic, with Philips-head screws the size of the boy's fist acting as joints at the knees, elbows and so on.

'Captain Pavlov...' the boy uttered at the toy-made-real.

Pavlov turned his head slightly and rotated his painted eyes downward so that they were looking at the boy. He slammed a button on his chest and a voice played out of a speaker grill underneath.

'EVERYONE HIT THE DECKS!'

The boy just stared back at the soldier, too awe-stuck to budge. Pavlov pressed the button again.

'I SAID "HIT THE DECKS", LIEUTENANT!'

Without giving a third warning, Captain Pavlov opened fire. Plastic bullets shot out of the M16's barrel as the boy ducked down behind the sofa. Some of the bullets embedded in the wall, others shattered framed photos of him and his parents while even more of them just ricocheted off the fireplace.

Loki was enjoying himself more than he had in quite a while. As the army toy continued to shoot up the living room – and the boy kept on whimpering behind the couch – he surveyed all that he'd done. The fir tree and decorations, that had seemed so precious to the house's occupants, now lay in ruin. The carpet and furniture were soaked and flooded with rapidly melting snow. And, of course, the walls were getting pummelled with a few thousand plastic bullets.

Quite a nice, relaxing night over all. He felt invigorated.

Just then, a smell drifted in the open window. Was it-? Yes! The wild aroma that he'd been wanting to track down for all these weeks. Finally!

With one last kick of the tree on the ground, Loki ran straight out of the house, leaving the boy cowering and the soldier firing. He paused outside the front door, sniffed the air then bounded off in the direction of the smell.



In the morning, the boy's parents came down to find that their living room had been turned into a warzone overnight. They looked at each other in confusion; neither one had seen nor heard a thing during the night. And yet, there was water everywhere, someone had destroyed their Christmas tree and a life-size toy soldier was lying on the ground, his batteries and bullets long spent. They eventually found their son behind the couch, where he'd managed to fall asleep after the first couple of hours of Captain Pavlov's onslaught.

'Son?' they asked when he woke up and gazed at them blearily. 'Are you alright?'

He looked around the room once, then back to his parents and answered simply, 'I'll never be a good boy again.'

Loki will return 2012 in...

ARTHUR  
QUINN  
AND THE  
FENRIS WOLF

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