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Eddadämmerung – Odin vs. Hastur

A Short Apocalypse for All Hallows' Eve

Like most myths, Ragnarök had been misunderstood, for gods cannot die. The illusion of impermanence had been built into the sagas to make room for the supremacy of irreproachable YHWH. The universe was his, the nine worlds making way for and ideologically merging into the one Earth. The Aesir, Vanir, and Jotnar were laicized. Now was the time for God, and his angels and saints.

That was the real Ragnarök – the gods faded away, became reduced to stories. The religion of Asatru had become Norse mythology. But venerated deity or mythical archetype, he still lived. The underlying strings of the universe that neither know nor are bound by space and time still reverberated with the songs of the Aesir. He would live as long as humanity had memory for him, still told the old tales. Quantum foam now lapped at the shores of Valhalla.

And so he'd existed on the fringes for an age, wandering anonymously through the void. His retinue was intact, his gloomy grandeur still inspiring the brave, terrorizing the craven. As myth, he'd been reduced from religious veneration, but elevated into the realm of art. The very definitions of the new folk declared that art is infallible, containing perfection because of or in spite of itself. So though his existence was more essential than substantial, he remained as real as the phenomenon of thought. He lived.

He was not alone.

While brooding on his throne, his two ravens, his messengers, brought news of the swarming things. Theirs was a different dimension, but Hugin and Munin saw with the penetrating sight of their master, and what they saw was horribly disturbing. Were they gods? Immortals could harm other immortals, reducing them to mere shades, even the appearance of death for a time, if the hurt be grievous enough.

Gods or monsters, they were terrible to behold. He'd never seen anything like them. Oh, he'd seen and slain innumerable Jotuns. He'd triumphed over demons from the infertile depths of Hel. He'd even sacrificed his own eye for wisdom, hung himself on the World Tree Yggdrasil, and allowed the rune magic of the Elder Futhark to enter through a ghastly self-inflicted wound from his own spear. His was the authority of all Asgard – his rule was absolute, his might unquestioned. The Allfather was as formidable as an army.

But he was perplexed. *What were those things?* Kraken-headed, bat-winged, tentacled monstrosities with flopping and swarming attendants also clad in tentacles, and eyes, and teeth, shifting back and forth between planes and impregnating all manner of beings in order to perpetuate their fell spoor? They survived anywhere like bacteria, spread madly like viruses. He'd never been so *disgusted* at the mere existence of a species.

They were evil, totally corrupt. He remembered back in the beginning when he and his brothers had created entire worlds out of the body of the frost giant, Ymir. He'd been evil, too. The Allfather's assumption of power had come at the expense of slaying this primordial being, but that had been necessary. He'd never encountered such ravenous, all-encompassing entropy as the dominating appetites of Ymir. He would have ceaselessly enslaved and murdered throughout the realms, were he not sacrificed to create them.

But these creatures were worse, far worse than even he could have imagined, and he was a *god*.

There was one in particular that aggrieved him the most. It was impossibly huge, with a vaguely humanoid, vaguely reptilian body, covered with perpetually undulating tentacles like cilia. Each tentacle was much smaller than the four primary limbs, about the size of a man. Yet they were covered with hooks and suction cups, and in the suckers would appear the faces of tormented beings of any given species that it had devoured from any given plane, consigned to the Hel of the creature's monolithic body. When it deigned to open its maw to roar, the screams of the damned were what emanated; a vast choir of the tortured. Its arms and legs were as stout as Yggdrasil itself, its bulky mass outsized Jormungand's, though not in length, and it had a pair of jaws that sported teeth like sharp swords and long knives, making Fenrir's like unto the beard of a dwarf.

Fenrir and Jormungand. He grimly smiled at the version of Ragnarök he'd allowed to stand as a parting act from sovereignty. Being misunderstood didn't bother him a bit. He was far beyond caring about anything like that. To think, he'd die in the first place, and *from a wolf-bite!* He loved wolves, and kept two of them as pets. But if need be, he knew what to do with a

dog that liked to bite. Even more absurd was the thought of his strong son, the Thunderer, dying from snake-bite. Thor's was the power of all Asgard – he knew what to do with snakes.

The Allfather was known by many names, and had wandered through countless realms. But the name he liked best was his blood-name, the name by which he was known to the Asatruar. *Odin*.

His brow furrowed and his grip tightened on his great spear, Gungnir. He sat astride his steed, the eight-legged horse Sleipnir that could run through the elements and between the plains, surrounded by a small company of Valkyries, six in all, astride their mounts. He wore a Viking helm and bright Alvar chainmail that sparkled like polished diamonds, providing the only illumination in the void, the astral plane, in which he was suspended in defiance of gravity, though none of that force could technically be said to exist there. His ravens and wolves were not with him. None of the Aesir or Vanir, including his wife Frigga, had been told of Odin's plan. They would have followed him in spite of his orders.

Odin frowned. He thought of the giant swarmer, the Jormungand-Fenrir thing, and ruminated on the doubt he felt for the first time in his long life, ever since learning about those grotesqueries. Barring the imponderable YHWH, he'd never known anyone or anything he wasn't certain he could defeat. But that thing, that god or monster, seemed too much *even for him*, and it cut him to the heart to know it.

He had to find out. *Had to. Could he do it?*

While Thor wore a belt to enhance his strength, Odin bore a gold oath ring, named Draupnir, which he wore as an armband. Before combat, he would use it in a sanctification ritual, and with the chanted force of the Galdr, it would supremely enhance and internalize his

rune-magic and berserker rage. He'd never attempted a quest of this magnitude, and had shored up his strength for a long time preparing for this ritual of creation and destruction.

Placing Gungnir in a sheath he wore on his back, he folded his hands and spoke the rune of ownership, "*Othila.*" In front of Sleipnir, an iron altar appeared, suspended in the void. In all directions, an opaque force spread out from beneath it, giving the idea of matter a tangible reality that rapidly unrolled like a carpet. It continued outward into an appearing horizon, deepening into multilayered strata. He now stood on a grey, barren battlefield, his armor still providing the only light in that black background, now resembling a night sky.

Entering a trance state, Odin chanted the day rune, "*Dagaz.*" The sky filled with forbidding light, a firmament of blood. The Valkyries dismounted and bowed, spreading out in a semi-circle behind the altar. They unsheathed their weapons so the business ends faced Odin. Then their horses and Sleipnir knelt in reverence, and Odin himself dismounted.

He clenched his jaw in determination. The patch over one eye socket crouched like a challenge. A hand reached out and slid Draupnir off an opposite arm in the deafening silence, holding it in both hands. Gripping it at the level of sight, he gazed into its width, where he had carved a Hammer of Thor rune. The ring pulsed as golden light the color of mead poured forth from the center, preternaturally incensing the god and his servants. A penumbra surrounded them, the light intensifying in a sphere until all was molten gold with barely visible outlines of the company remaining.

In this divine furnace, a deep series of overtones emanated from Odin's throat. Gradually the landscape began to reverberate, until he suddenly became silent. Then, taking Draupnir in one hand as a ritual hammer and unsheathing Gungnir with the other, he chanted the consecration:

Hammer to the north, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Hammer to the east, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Hammer to the west, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Hammer to the south, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Hammer in Asgard, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Hammer in Midgard, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Hammer in Helheim, I call to thee, hold and hallow this holy site!

Each time a hammer was called, he made a hammer sign and thrust Gungnir upward, and a bolt of lightning struck down through the molten sphere and into the altar. With each accompanying clap of thunder, an anticipatory rage rose up by degrees, swelling his heart with pride. He would have to complete the ritual and hold onto it in order to meditate. The berserker-lust would serve him well if the creature responded to his challenge.

Odin meant to insure that it would. He'd discerned that the beast saw the utterance of its name as an unforgivable affront, and so by that very name Odin would call it forth.

The Valkyries were keening now, untouched in the midst of immolation. The horses snorted, stamping their hooves, the breath of their nostrils displacing the light like frothing mead. The god took both Draupnir and Gungnir in his hands, walked up to the altar, and smashed the base of the spear into a hollow in the iron.

A final crash of thunder and lightning struck simultaneously with the impact, shattering the orb surrounding the company. Immediately all the gold fire filled Gungnir, coalescing in the long blade like glory.

Odin stood on the altar, raised Gungnir defiantly, and poured out his Lot-Cup, his *Perthro*. *"I am Odin Allfather, Lord of the Aesir and Vanir, Master over the Jotnar! Hear me o*

worm, *Fellspoor Swarmspawner*, *I summon thee to your doom. I summon thee forth...HASTUR!*”

There was a ripple through the atmosphere of the Asgardian’s battle-world, and the earth shook. But nothing else happened. *“Art thou craven, Bilgeswallower? Mine is the authority of all Asgard, its power mine to wield. Dare to face Odin your Doom-Bringer...HASTUR!”*

The earth quailed, and the atmosphere stirred again, and this time a legion of swarmers poured through the sky as from a great distance. Furious, Odin could see they were mere minions. He spread out his free hand and made the ice rune, *Isa*, and the whole host, frozen solid in a thick sheet of ice with their heads exposed, instantly plummeted to the earth. With a gesture, Odin sent the remounted Valkyries to dispatch them. Aglow with perpetually youthful exuberance, the Choosers of the Slain reveled in their wet work.

“I am the True Blood Leader of Asgard, the Wielder of the Spear and the Runes! Know you the wrath of Odin Ragnarök-Master. Your life is long but not eternal, for you are not a god but a dog. The remainder of your time is coming to you, whipped cur. It is time for you to die...HASTUR!”

The earth reeled and rocked. *“HASTUR!”* A rift opened up beneath the altar and spread over the landscape like a vast scar. It fell deep into the ground, but Odin spread his arms and soared like an eagle far above the wound. *“HASTUR,”* he shouted.

He motioned for his Handmaidens, who knew the task for which they had been prepared as a contingency would be expected of them. Led by Sleipnir, they flew to his side. He gave them the protection of *Algiz* and motioned *Raido* over them, so that they could teleport back to Asgard safely. He opened his hand and a white stone appeared in the palm, engraved with

Berkana for rebirth. *Just in case.* He patted Sleipnir on the muzzle; the steed lapped up and swallowed the stone, then ran back through the elements and between the plains to Valhalla.

They stood in the sky in silence for a moment, and then Odin suddenly drew back his arm, and hurled his spear with all his strength. **“HAAASTURRR!”**

The Valkyries flew alongside Gungnir over a vast distance. Bearing it aloft through dimensions, they kept its aim true until the fell target was in sight. Knowing impact was imminent, they teleported away.

Odin sat cross-legged, still suspended, for what seemed an age. He was consumed in self-contemplation, the rage growing white hot. Then after a while, he smiled. “*Sowulo,*” he said. *Sun.* Then he opened his hand, and Gungnir re-appeared. It was time.

Stretched out over the earth of one of the worlds he had despoiled, the Unspeakable One slept the sleep of the just. He was covered with quivering Byakhee, who took advantage of his unconsciousness to consume their dank nourishment, frenziedly feeding from the tips of his tentacles. Some of them had once been human. Now they swarmed, compulsively impregnated, voraciously devoured. The Byakhee knew only entropy and hatred.

Their Overlord rolled over in his sleep, and without any awareness of it, crushed several thousand of them to death. While some of the relatively few survivors shook and convulsed, impaled on his hooks, trapped souls mocked them from their sucker-faces. The hooks were so convenient; they could always keep his disciples close to him. Hastur never wondered where such a tool might be when he needed it.

He was benevolent, for he offered his followers true union, complete conversion. Some became Byakhee, others he consumed by the score as food, keeping their souls within himself.

He sometimes ate Byakhee as well when the mood struck him. But what god didn't acknowledge his worshippers' desire for the fullest possible union with their deity? He gave them everything, and in his magnanimity, he gave it to them on *his terms*. In return for his aid, he granted them a physical as well as spiritual metamorphosis. As for the non-worshippers, the ones whose worlds he invaded, whose inhabitants he simply dismembered and ate, well, that was only a god's indulgence. Surely to deny him his sport, or to seek to punish or even admonish him, would constitute the *far greater* offense.

If his canyon-maw could smile, it curved in such a manner while he slept and dreamed. Yet a disturbing image invaded his unconsciousness. It was a man-thing, hard as iron, and glowing with intense heat – he could feel it even now through the void. What was it doing? Did it dare to challenge him? Did it call out his *name*?

Hastur awoke and opened his eyes. This was an unforgiveable affront, but he didn't particularly care. It was just a stupid man-thing. He casually picked Byakhee off of his hooks and flicked them down into his gullet, from which the souls of the damned welcomed them home with extraordinary delight.

But the man-thing dared to repeat the challenge? And what lore was this? The words *hurt* him, caused him *pain*? What did it call this unfamiliar magic? *Runes*? The awareness of such unfamiliar commands made his mountainous head throb. It was like engaging his thoroughly despised cousin Cthulhu in combat. Hastur was stronger, but fighting Cthulhu was like taking an auger in the brain. The creature facing him now, "Odin" it called itself? – had power he couldn't ignore. With a gesture, he sent the remaining intact Byakhee through a dimensional gap to confront the thing.

He opened his mind's eye and saw firsthand how easily Odin neutralized his devotees, his children. Rage and desire co-mingled and aroused him. Hastur liked the female things, and his appetites prompted him to rise. He would respond to the challenge.

“AAARRRGGGHHH!!!” Through his great snout, the legion cried out in unison. It was that accursed pain again, intensely magnified. His colossal frame began to quake as the power of Odin's command rippled outward in waves. *Through dimensions? What manner of foe is this?* He took considerable time to collect himself, at last standing fully upright. But as soon as he turned and faced where would create a gap through which to enter and rend his foe, he saw something fast hurtling towards him. “AAARRRGGGHHH!!!”

Gungnir hit Hastur square in the gut, with all the power of Asgard to propel it. First the blade, then the shaft descended, too quick for the Unspeakable to prevent it, fully into his torso. As the weapon imbedded itself, the implausibly thick fat closed back up over the wound. Then from deep within his innards, a white-hot explosion went off!

Megalithic organs shifted about, the souls of the damned clamoring aloud in both agony and exaltation at their gaoler's torment, and yellow-white flames shot from Hastur's maw. Something opened up in him, and a viscous, black river followed suit.

As he fell back and the landscape rattled with the impact, he realized that he was seriously wounded. *What is this torrent, my ichor?* He had no frame of reference to comprehend receiving such hurt. His viscera moved back and forth, various tissues losing their grip. His blood seemed to burn within him like a supernova, and disbelief mingled with torment. If he had ever questioned anything, it had certainly not been his immortality, but he began to feel the life run out of him.

“NO!” The choristers screamed. He was Hastur. There were actions he could take to save himself. He loathed what he was about to do with all his heart and soul, but the man-thing had taken him by surprise. It wouldn’t happen again, but first he had to enlist aid and drastically heal himself while his pontoon lungs still drew breath.

Using their mind-speech, he called on distant kinsfolk:

Yog-Sothoth, Lurker at the Threshold, the Key and the Gate, the Beyond One, Opener of the Way, the All-in-One and the One-in-All, I summon thee. You alone can travel to Hastur immediately, and you alone can bring the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, whose aid I also require and enlist. Yog-Sothoth and Shub-Niggurath I summon thee both. Do not serve the suffering Hastur out of love, for we are gods of the unquenchable hatred. Serve me for I offer you a great boon. Take all my souls, take all my Byakhee, take what is mine so that only Hastur remains, but restored completely in all magnificence. My gift to you outweighs your service, and your greed is as extravagant as my own. Restore your kinsman for the sake of our race and your desires.

Fast as thought, a portal opened in the abyss, and the dark gods came through it. Their scornful condemnation burned as viciously as the scorching wounds within him. Yog-Sothoth, all tentacles, teeth, and eyestalks, stood in the portal, and beneath him oozed Shub-Niggurath, a malevolent flood with constantly appearing mouths and unidentifiable organs.

Hastur howled as the Black Goat crawled over his body, probing the extent of his horrible wounds with liquescent proboscises. Yet Shub-Niggurath possessed formidable lore, and while she sucked the souls of the damned from out of Hastur and into her own mass, healing cauterization poured forth. Renewed strength and vigor gradually began to return to the Unspeakable, as his

bones, muscles, and myriad alien connectors rapidly knit themselves back together. At last he was fully restored, and filled with the geas of vengeance.

He would kill the man-thing, savor its soul as the first of a new collection. Yes – the old ways would give way to the *new*. For did not “Odin” have kinsmen Hastur could convert? He didn’t ask himself whether or not the “Aesir” or “Vanir” were immortals, didn’t care about the “Jotnar.” He only knew that the brute force of his bottomless malice, though he considered it munificence, would reach out and crush his foes. He had new souls to collect, new Byakhee to create. He would destroy and possess them all.

He nodded at Yog-Sothoth, who while standing in the current portal he’d made, opened up another one opposite himself. As though drawn through a great vortex, legion upon legion of hapless Byakhee flew through the gap and into the Beyond One’s gaping mouth. Various tongues and feelers darted from the orifice, trapping the creatures that almost squirmed away, so that none escaped.

With many thousands more young of her own, the Black Goat moved back towards an elongated, bloated Yog-Sothoth. Hastur rose and faced his kinsmen. They regarded one another with immemorial contempt for a moment, and then the summoned blinked away.

Hastur flexed the iron masts of his limbs, and gradually broke into a run. Each footprint was like an excavated village, and the earth was rocked to its foundations. Arms spread wide, teeth flashing, tongue lolling, he uttered forth a great shout now in his own voice: ***“YOU DARE SPEAK THE NAME OF HASTUR LITTLE MAN? YOU SHALL BE CRUSHED FORTHWITH! ALL MEMORY OF YOU WILL BE ERASED FOREVER, AND I SHALL DEVOUR AND ENSLAVE YOUR ENTIRE RACE!”***

As he ran, he thought a gap into existence. It gradually opened wider as he drew closer. The man-thing hovered there, ripe for the picking. Hastur's arms were outstretched. He was ready to embrace.

Odin was covered in a white-hot orb of *Algiz*. Nothing would penetrate his force-shield. He'd fully internalized the Futhark, which would now be wielded as thought. There would be no more Galdr. The chants had been made, the Nid-curses cast. Now he would fight. His vehemence increased with every lumbering stride Hastur took in his haste to meet him. He saw him from afar, rapidly closing the distance. *Loathsome slug.*

The Asgardian uncrossed his legs and stood up in the air, Gungnir ablaze in his mailed fist. Oh, how the runes would flash, the blood spatter! Finally the behemoth charged through the gate and hovered there for a moment, a megalopolis suspended over a hermitage. It descended like an avalanche.

Odin rose to meet it, Gungnir raised in both fists. He would try to drive the blade like a spike into the soft place under its chin. But Hastur was prepared this time – as one prodigious fist descended toward the Allfather's head, another open hand came from the side and slapped him away like an insect. Odin fell a long distance toward the ground, but recovered at the last instant before impact. He'd never been hit so hard.

Zigzagging back and forth, the bright god flew between Hastur's repeated hammer blows. A shower of dirt and minerals sprayed from the impact of each. The Unspeakable mocked him: "*You thought to slay the Old One, pestilence? Who are you to defy my sovereignty?*" **BOOM!** "*Your thoughts lay bare to me, and you think yourself my equal because you and your brethren slew a giant and created your paltry worlds?*" **BOOM!** "*In the time it took you to create this*

place of reckoning,” BOOM! “I would have laid waste to that entire system, and made you all my disciples!” BOOM! “You and two others destroyed a frost giant?” BOOM! “I alone routinely slay my own creations by the tens of thousands whenever the happy thought occurs to me!” BOOM!

Odin couldn't ascend to penetrate anything vital amidst the descending cavalcade of fists, so he flew up and out of range. Clouds of mineral dust momentarily blocked Hastur's view, and in that instant, Gungnir's blade flashed gold fire in broad strokes across the Unspeakable's chest, tattooing him with the elemental rune *Hagalaz*. He had been marked; the Allfather would use it later. Hastur screamed in pain and indignation, and Odin spoke.

“Think you that I perceive us as equals, Bilgeswallower? Fellspoor Swarmspawner! I am your Superior! You create only entropy and death, and I kill only when necessary and to create life anew. Had not your bilious relations intervened, you would already lie still beneath the Allfather's spear.” He flew in closer, weaving, unleashing gold fire in torrents at Hastur's face. They burned the backs of his forearms and melted away scores of tentacles, as the howling Old One moved into a defensive posture.

But Odin became too confident, flew in too fast for a killing stroke...*now, now, let me stab through its chin and I'll melt that mass of ganglia...* and Hastur reached out and caught him with both hands!

The beast longed to crush the Asgardian between his fingers like ground meat, but the *Algiz* was too strong, and burned to the touch. Too impatient to bash Odin into the ground, he instead flung him toward the landscape, which exploded on impact. *“Stupid, stupid,”* thought Odin from within a deep crater. He was barely conscious, incapacitated. Were it not for his preparations, he could have been crushed.

Hastur's foot shot down like an asteroid, driving Odin further underground. It descended again and again, until the Unspeakable was sunk up to a knee. He screamed with delight and withdrew his foot, leaning over to look. Despite his protection, Odin was severely battered, unable to move. Through the hole in the earth far above him, he glimpsed the elemental rune carved into Hastur's chest, and it gave him an idea. When his foe reached down into the dark, thinking the protection burned out by now, his grasping fingers came up with nothing.

Odin saw undulating tentacles swarming about an oaken wrist as the clawed hand came toward him. The ghastly suckers smacked in autonomic anticipation, the hooks clicking and clacking. For how long could his protection hold out against such an onslaught? Now was not the time to find out – he would need it to survive the endgame. Besides, he knew he had unleashed cosmic forces, knew what he was up against. What if *Berkana* wasn't enough?

If he were completely pulverized in this forced conflict, his adversary wouldn't stop with him. He'd go after all Asgard and Vanaheim. What fell allegiances could he forge with the Jotnar if he didn't kill or *incorporate* them first? His immediate concern was triumphing, but first he would have to live. Who knew how long a resurrection would take, or the extent to which Hastur could displace his energies and essences? What if he lay dormant for millennia, and there was no one left on Earth at all? If the strings ceased to vibrate, if there was no Odin or memory of him left anywhere at even a quantum level, his death would be permanent. He could be facing a Ragnarök! *No*. It would not end like this. This was his world, his rules. Hastur had been goaded here, and would suffer the consequences. This would be Odin's most glorious tale.

With a thought he merged deeper into the soil, barely escaping the monster's reach. The elements yielded to his will while healing and restoring his vitality, and Odin glided through the

depths as if suspended on the back of an Alvar mining drill. High above on the surface, he could hear Hastur stamping about in fury. *Soon I will ease your suffering, filth.*

He called a tunnel of wind to surround his protection. It rapidly gathered momentum, and he sailed through the substrata with increasing speed, until the air and earth combined into a vortex. Then he shot upward until bursting through the surface, and raced toward Hastur, whose back was facing him. Upon reaching level ground, the whirlwind exponentially increased in strength and momentum. Now he was ready.

The sound of howling wind caused the Old One to wheel around, as a tornado rushed toward him. In the storm's eye was Odin. He was glowing argent, and gold fire radiated from Gungnir like a sun. His face was a rictus of berserker fury, and he laughed with the terrible cheer of a conqueror. Hastur screeched and charged, and the entities collided – an irresistible force against an immovable object.

The storm of their conflict expanded into a supercell, a Jupiter's eye of fists and malice. Odin was insanely laughing. Hastur emitted a horrible, reptilian cry, throwing blow after blow at the Allfather, who was being fiercely battered away, but kept zooming back at the juggernaut, slashing and flinging flames of fire with his spear. Hastur connected a final time, and then Odin, rebounding in mid-flight with an extra burst of speed as if shot from a Jotun's yew-bow, suddenly flew straight into Hastur's gaping mouth!

The creature laughed out loud in amazed disbelief and swallowed. Almost immediately, the mirth became the terror of an agony against which he was helpless to protect himself. He had been marked, and now *Hagalaz* began to pulse and throb across his chest, the lines expanding down to his torso, and up to the chin Odin had longed to impale.

Talons outstretched, the eagle plunged into a black forest of meat. His prey was everywhere he looked. *Algiz* was holding, but the internal vitriol was beginning to burn it away, so Odin would have to act fast. The vortex still surrounded him, and was displacing elephantine sheets of sinew and gristle. As he flew throughout the gaping necropolis of Hastur's frame, the god cast sheets of ice here, flames of fire there, including heaping mounds of earth for good measure. His flight was interspersed with slashes and stabbings from Gungnir, a baton in the grip of a maniacal choir director.

Hastur screamed and howled, futilely pounding and tearing at his chest. He fought all the way to the final moment when the Allfather drove his spear through and roasted Hastur's dark heart. At this he stopped moving, and the tentacles lay still. There was a vertiginous quiet, and slowly his bulk began to careen backwards. As the corpse made its inchoate fall to detrition, a burst of gold spurted from the tattoo, followed by Odin in the waning glory of his might.

The beast's body crashed into the earth with a mighty thud. Odin flew onto its forehead and gazed down at the vanquished megalopolis. He addressed his slain foe with grim satisfaction. "*Mayhap we are equals, Bilgeswallower, for we now have something in common.*" Reversing Gungnir's position in his grip, he stabbed Hastur through an eye socket as with a dagger. "*We have both sacrificed an eye for wisdom.*"

Withdrawing his weapon and raising it in triumph, the Allfather gave forth a thunderous shout. Odin was victorious!