

# **The Poetic Edda**



# **The Poetic Edda**

Northvegr Edition

**Edda Sæmundar Hinns Froða**

The Edda Of Sæmund The Learned

Translated From the Old Icelandic

By

**Benjamin Thorpe**



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This Northvegr Edition is an unabridged and unaltered republication of a translation that was published in two separate editions. The first edition is an edition published by the Norroena Society in 1907, as *The Elder Edda of Saemond Sigfusson, and the Younger Edda of Snorre Sturleson*. This edition also included a translation of the *Prose Edda*, translated by I. A. Blackwell, which is not included in the present edition. We no longer have access to the text of the second edition, which is most likely from Thorpe's 1866 publication, *Edda Sæmundar hinns Frôða*. The texts from the two editions are virtually the same except for a few key points. The 1907 edition includes footnotes (which have been reproduced for the Northvegr Edition). The 1866 edition includes three lays that did not appear in the 1907 edition: *Hrafnagaldr Odins*, *Gunnars Slagr* and *Gröttasóngr*. All three are included in this edition. Every effort has been taken to reproduce this translation as accurately as possible.

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## Preface

(Chiefly from the *Vita Sæmundi Multiseii volgo Froda*, Autore Arna Magnæo, prefixed to the Copenhagen edition.)

Sæmund, son of Sigfus, the reputed collector of the poems bearing his name, which is sometimes also called the Elder, and the Poetic, Edda, was of a highly distinguished family, being descended in a direct line from King Harald Hildetönn. He was born at Oddi, his paternal dwelling in the south of Iceland, between the years 1054 and 1057, or about 50 years after the establishment by law of the Christian religion in that island; hence it is easy to imagine that many heathens, or baptized favourers of the old mythic songs of heathenism, may have lived in his days and imparted to him the lays of the times of old, which his unfettered mind induced him to hand down to posterity. The youth of Sæmund was passed in travel and study, in Germany and France, and, according to some accounts, in Italy. His cousin John Ögmundson, who later became first bishop of Holum, and after his death was received among the number of saints, when on his way to Rome, fell in with his youthful kinsman, and took him back with him to Iceland, in the year 1076. Sæmund afterwards became a priest at Oddi, where he instructed many young men in useful learning; but the effects of which were not improbably such as to the common people might appear as witchcraft or magic: and, indeed, Sæmund's predilection for the sagas and songs of the old heathen times (even for the magical ones) was so well known, that among his countrymen there were some who regarded him as a great sorcerer, though chiefly in what is called white or innocuous and defensive sorcery, a repute which still clings to his memory among the common people of Iceland, and will long adhere to it through the numerous and popular stories regarding him (some of them highly entertaining) that are orally transmitted from generation to generation.

The following, the first among many, may serve as a specimen. Sæmund was residing, in the south of Europe, with a famous Master, by whom he was instructed in every kind of lore; while, on the other hand, he forgot (apparently through intense study) all that he had previously learned, even to his own name; so that when the holy man John Ögmundson came to his abode, he told him that his name was Koll; but on John insisting that he was no other than Sæmund Sigfusson, born at Oddi in Iceland, and relating to him many particulars regarding himself, he at length became conscious of his own identity, and resolved to flee from the place with his kinsman. For the purpose of deceiving the Master, John continued some time in the place, and often came to visit him and Sæmund: till at last, on dark night, they betook themselves to flight. No sooner had the Master missed them than he sent in pursuit of them; but in vain, and the heavens were too overcast to admit, according to his custom, of reading their whereabouts in the stars. So they traveled day and night and all the following day. But the next night was clear, and the Master at once read in the stars where they were, and set out after them at full speed. Then Sæmund, casting his eyes up at the heavens, said: 'Now is my Master in chase of us, and sees where we are.' And on John asking what was to be done, he answered: 'Take one of my shoes off; fill it with water, and set it on my head.' John did so, and at the same moment, the Master, looking up at the heavens, says to his companion: 'Bad news: the stranger John has drowned my pupil; there is water about his forehead.'

And thereupon returned home. The pair now again prosecute their journey night and day; but, in the following night, the Master again consults the stars, when, to his great amazement, he sees the star of Sæmund directly above his head, and again sets out after the fugitives. Observing this, Sæmund says: 'The astrologer is again after us, and again we must look to ourselves: take my shoe off again, and with your knife stab me in the thigh: fill the shoe with blood, and place it on the top of my head.' John does as directed, and the Master again gazing at the stars, says: 'There is blood now about the star of Master Koll, and the stranger has for certain murdered him': and so returns home. The old man now has once more recourse to his art; but on seeing Sæmund's star shining brightly above him, he exclaimed: 'My pupil is still living: so much the better. I have taught him more than enough; for he outdoes me both in astrology and magic. Let them now proceed in safety; I am unable to hinder their departure.'

Sæmund died at the age of 77, leaving behind him a work on the history of Norway and Iceland, which is now entirely lost. The first who ascribed to Sæmund the collection of poems known as the *Poetic Edda*,<sup>1</sup> was Brynjolf Sveinsson, bishop of Skalholt. This prelate, who was a zealous collector of ancient manuscripts, found in the year 1643, the old vellum codex, which is the most complete of all the known manuscripts of the Edda; of this he caused a transcript to be made, which he entitled *Edda Sæmundi Multiseii*. The transcript came into the possession of the royal historiographer Torfæus; the original, together with other MSS., was presented to the King of Denmark, Frederick III., and placed in the royal library at Copenhagen, where it now is.<sup>2</sup> As many of the Eddaic poems appear to have been orally transmitted in an imperfect state, the collector has supplied the deficiencies by prose insertions, whereby the integrity of the subject is to a certain degree restored.

The collection called *Sæmund's Edda* consists of two parts, viz., the Mythological and the Heroic. It is the former of these which is now offered to the public in an English version. In the year 1797, a translation of this first part, by A.S. Cottle, was published at Bristol. This work I have never met with; nor have I seen any English version of any part of the Edda, which the exception of Gray's spirited but free translation of the *Vegtamskvida*. The present volume closes with a translation of the *Solarlið*, a poem in which the religion of the country appears in a transition state from Heathenism to Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Some readers will, I doubt not, be desirous of ampler illustration of the mythological poems of the *Edda* than that which is afforded by the Index to this volume; to such I would recommend the translation of the *Prose Edda*, in Mallet's *Northern Antiquities*, published by Bohn, and Thorpe's *Northern Mythology and Popular Traditions*, in 3 vols. Small 8, the 1st vol. Of which contains a good and satisfactory compendium of the Odinic religion. The German scholar will find ample and valuable information on the same subject in the "Altnordische Mythologie" prefixed to Professor Lünings editions of the *Edda*, a work which I have principally used while revising the present translation, and which I regard as unquestionably the best existing.

From a memorandum made at the time, I find that this volume was ready for press in the year 1856, though the idea of offering it to the public was not entertained until about two years ago.

1. Bishop P.E. Müller supposes the greater number of the Eddaic poems to be of the 8th century. *Sagabibliothek* II, p.131.

2. Codex Regius, No. 2365, 4to. The handwriting of this MS. is supposed to be of the beginning of the 14th. century.

3. The *Solarlið* is by some supposed to be the composition of Sæmund himself.



On intimating my intention to one or two persons, I was informed that an edition was already in the press, and, consequently, I withdrew from the field. But as that edition seems to be postponed *sine die*, or I had been misinformed regarding it, I have resolved on sending forth my humble production. It is needless to inform my readers that it has no pretension to elegance; but I believe it to be a faithful though homely representation of the original, and may, at all events serve as a stop-gap until made to give place to a worthier work; for that the lack of an edition of the *Edda* seems a chasm in our literature cannot be denied.

If a not unfavourable reception is given it by the British public, the Second, or Heroic part shall be immediately sent to press.

### **The Editor**



# Part 1: The Mythological Lays

## Völuspá: The Vala's Prophecy

### Introduction to the Völuspá

As introductory to the *Völuspá*, the following description of a wandering *Vala* or prophetess may be thought both desirable and interesting: "We find them present at the birth of children, when they seem to represent the Norns. They acquired their knowledge either by means of *seid*, during the night, which all others in the house were sleeping, and uttered their oracles in the morning; or they received sudden inspirations during the signing of certain songs appropriated to the purpose, without which the sorcery could not perfectly succeed. These *seid*-women were common over all of the North. When invited by the master of a family, they appeared in a peculiar costume, sometimes with a considerable number of followers, e.g., with fifteen young men and fifteen girls. For their soothsaying they received money, gold rings, and other precious things. Sometimes it was necessary to compel them to prophesy. An old description of such a *Vala*, who went from guild to guild telling fortunes, will give the best idea of these women and their proceedings: -

Thorbiörg, nicknamed the little *Vala*, during the winter attended the guilds, at the invitation of those who desired to know their fate, or the quality of the coming year. Everything was prepared in the most sumptuous manner for her reception. There was an elevated seat, on which lay a cushion stuffed with feathers. A man was sent to meet her. She came in the evening dressed in a blue mantle fastened with thongs and set with stones down to the lap; round her neck she had a necklace of glass beads, on her head a hood of black lambskin lined with white catskin; in her hand a staff, the head of which was mounted with brass and ornamented with stones; round her body she wore a girdle of agaric (*knöske*), from which hung a bag containing her conjuring apparatus; on her feet were rough calfskin shoes with long ties and tin buttons, on her hands catskin gloves, white and hairy within. All bade her welcome with a reverent salutation; the master himself conducted her by the hand to her seat. She undertook no prophecy on the first day, but would first pass a night there. In the evening of the following day she ascended her elevated seat, caused the women to place themselves round her, and desired them to sing certain songs, which they did in a strong, clear voice. She then prophesied of the coming year, and afterwards, all that would advanced and asked her such questions as they thought proper, to which they received plain answers." *Northern Mythology I. p.214, Den Ældre Edda I. p. 6.*

In the following grand and ancient lay, dating most probably from the time of heathenism, are set forth, as the utterances of a *Vala*, or wandering prophetess, as above described, the story of the creation of the world from chaos, of the origin of the giants, the gods, the dwarfs, and the human race, together with other events relating to the mythology of the North, and ending with the destruction of the gods and the world, and their renewal.

## Völuspá The Vala's Prophecy

1. For silence I pray all  
sacred children,  
great and small,  
sons of Heimdall<sup>1</sup>  
they will that I Valfather's  
deeds recount,  
men's ancient saws,  
those that I best remember.

2. The Jötuns I remember  
early born,  
those who me of old  
have reared.  
I nine worlds remember,  
nine trees,  
the great central tree,  
beneath the earth.

3. There was in times of old,  
where Ymir dwelt,  
nor sand nor sea,  
nor gelid waves;  
earth existed not,  
nor heaven above,  
'twas a chaotic chasm,  
and grass nowhere.

4. Before Bur's sons  
raised up heaven's vault,  
they who the noble  
mid-earth shaped.  
The sun shone from the south  
over the structure's rocks:  
then was the earth begrown  
with herbage green.

1. In the *Rigsmal* we are informed how Heimdall, under the name of Rig, became the progenitor of the three orders of mankind.

5. The sun from the south,  
 the moon's companion,  
 her right hand cast  
 about the heavenly horses.  
 The sun knew not  
 where she<sup>2</sup> a dwelling had,  
 the moon knew not  
 what power he possessed,  
 the stars knew not  
 where they had a station.

6. Then went the powers all  
 to their judgement-seats,  
 the all-holy gods,  
 and thereon held council:  
 to night and to the waning moon  
 gave names;  
 morn they named,  
 and mid-day,  
 afternoon and eve,  
 whereby to reckon years.

7. The Æsir met  
 on Ida's plain;  
 they altar-steads and temples  
 high constructed;  
 their strength they proved,  
 all things tried,  
 furnaces established,  
 precious things forged,  
 formed tongs,  
 and fabricated tools;

8. At tables played at home;  
 joyous they were;  
 to them was naught  
 the want of gold,  
 until there came  
 Thurs-maidens three,  
 all powerful,  
 from Jötunheim.

2. In the Germanic tongues, as in the Semitic, the sun is fem., the moon masc.

9. Then went all the powers  
to their judgement-seats,  
the all-holy gods,  
and thereon held council,  
who should of the dwarfs  
the race create,  
from the sea-giant's blood  
and livid bones.

10. Then was Mötsognir  
created greatest  
of all the dwarfs,  
and Durin second;  
there in man's likeness  
they created many  
dwarfs from the earth,  
as Durin said.

11. Nýi and Nidi,  
Nordri and Sudri,  
Austri and Vestri,  
Althiöf, Dvalin  
Nár and Náin,  
Niping, Dáin,  
Bivör, Bavör,  
Bömbur, Nori,  
An and Anar,  
Ai, Miödvitnir,

12. Veig and Gandálf,  
Vindálf, Thráin,  
Thekk and Thorin,  
Thror, Vitr, and Litr,  
Núr and Nýrád,  
Regin and Rádsvid.  
Now of the dwarfs I have  
rightly told.

13. Fili, Kili,  
 Fundin, Nali,  
 Hepti, Vili,  
 Hanar, Svior,  
 Billing, Bruni,  
 Bild, Búri,  
 Frár, Hornbori,  
 Fræg and Lóni,  
 Aurvang, Iari,  
 Eikinskialdi.

14. Time 'tis of the dwarfs  
 in Dvalin's band,  
 to the sons of men,  
 to Lofar up to reckon,  
 those who came forth  
 from the world's rock,  
 earth's foundation,  
 to Iora's plains.

15. There were Draupnir,  
 and Dólgthrasir,  
 Hár, Haugspori,  
 Hlævang, Glói,  
 Skirvir, Virvir,  
 Skafid, Ai,  
 Alf and Yngvi,  
 Eikinskialdi,

16. Fjalar and Frosti,  
 Finn and Ginnar,  
 Heri, Höggstari,  
 Hlióðolf, Móin:  
 that above shall,  
 while mortals live,  
 the progeny of Lofar,  
 accounted be.

\*\*\*\*\*3

17. Until there came three  
 mighty and benevolent  
 Æsir to the world  
 from their assembly.  
 They found on earth,  
 nearly powerless,  
 Ask and Embla,  
 void of destiny.

18. Spirit they possessed not,  
 sense they had not,  
 blood nor motive powers,  
 nor goodly colour.  
 Spirit gave Odin,  
 sense gave Hoenir,  
 blood gave Lodur,  
 and goodly colour.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

19. I know an ash standing  
 Yggdrasil hight,  
 a lofty tree, laved  
 with limpid water:  
 thence come the dews  
 into the dales that fall  
 ever stands it green  
 over Urd's fountain.

20. Thence come maidens,  
 much knowing,  
 three from the hall,  
 which under that tree stands;  
 Urd hight the one,  
 the second Verdandi,  
 on a tablet they graved  
 Skuld the third.  
 Laws they established,  
 life allotted  
 to the sons of men;  
 destinies pronounced.



21. Alone she<sup>3</sup> sat without,  
 when came that ancient  
 dread Æsir's prince;  
 and in his eyes she gazed.

22. "Of what wouldst thou ask me?  
 Odin! I know all,  
 where thou thine eye didst sink  
 in the pure well of Mim."  
 Mim drinks mead each morn  
 from Valfather's pledge.<sup>5</sup>  
 Understand ye yet, or what?

23. The chief of hosts gave her  
 rings and necklace,  
 useful discourse,  
 and a divining spirit:  
 wide and far she saw  
 o'er every world.

24. She the Valkyriur saw  
 from afar coming,  
 ready to ride  
 to the gods' people:  
 Skuld held a shield,  
 Skögul was second,  
 then Gunn, Hild, Göndul,  
 and Geirskögul.  
 Now are enumerated  
 Herian's maidens,  
 the Valkyriur, ready  
 over the earth to ride.

25. She that war remembers,  
 the first on earth,  
 when Gullveig<sup>6</sup> they  
 with lances pierced,  
 and in the high one's<sup>7</sup> hall

4. The Vala here speaks of herself in the third person.

5. His eye, here understood to signify the sun.

6. A personification of gold. With the introduction of gold was the end of the golden age.

7. *i.e.*, Odin's: his hall is the world.

her burnt,  
 thrice burnt,  
 thrice brought her forth,  
 oft not seldom;  
 yet she still lives.

26. Heidi they called her,  
 whitherso'er she came,  
 the well-foreseeing Vala:  
 wolves she tamed,  
 magic arts she knew,  
 magic arts practised;  
 ever was she the joy  
 of evil people.

27. Then went the powers all  
 to their judgement-seats,  
 the all-holy gods,  
 and thereon held council,  
 whether the Æsir should  
 avenge the crime,  
 or all the gods  
 receive atonement.

28. Broken was the outer wall  
 of the Æsir's burgh.  
 The Vanir, foreseeing conflict  
 tramp o'er the plains.  
 Odin cast (his spear),  
 and mid the people hurled it:  
 that was the first  
 warfare in the world.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

29. Then went the powers all  
 to their judgement-seats,  
 the all-holy gods,  
 and thereon held council:  
 who had all the air  
 with evil mingled?  
 or to the Jötun race  
 Od's maid had given?

30. There alone was Thor  
with anger swollen.  
He seldom sits,  
when of the like he hears.  
Oaths are not held sacred;  
nor words, nor swearing,  
nor binding compacts  
reciprocally made.

31. She knows that Heimdall's  
horn is hidden  
under the heaven-bright  
holy tree.  
A river she sees flow,  
with foamy fall,  
from Valfather's pledge.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

32. East sat the crone,  
in Iárnvidir,  
Fenrir's progeny:  
of all shall be  
one especially  
the moon's devourer,  
in a troll's semblance.

33. He is sated with the last breath  
of dying men;  
the gods' seat he  
with red gore defiles:  
swart is the sunshine then  
for summers after;  
all weather turns to storm.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

34. There on a height sat,  
striking a harp,  
the giantess's watch,  
the joyous Egdir;  
by him crowed,  
in the bird-wood,  
the bright red cock,  
which Fialar hight.

35. Crowed o'er the Æsir  
Gullinkambi,  
which wakens heroes  
with the sire of hosts;  
but another crows  
beneath the earth,  
a soot-red cock,  
in the halls of Hel.

36. I saw of Baldr,  
the blood-stained god,  
Odin's son,  
the hidden fate.  
There stood grown up,  
high on the plain,  
slender and passing fair,  
the mistletoe.

37. From that shrub was made,  
as to me it seemed,  
a deadly, noxious dart.  
Hödr shot it forth;  
But Frigg bewailed,  
in Fensalir,  
Valhall's calamity.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

38. Bound she saw lying,  
under Hveralund,  
a monstrous form,  
to Loki like.  
There sits Sigyn,  
for her consort's sake,  
not right glad.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

39. Then the Vala knew  
the fatal bonds were twisting,  
most rigid,  
bonds from entrails made.

40. From the east a river falls,  
through venom dales,  
with mire and clods,  
Slid is its name.

41. On the north there stood,  
on Nida-fells,  
a hall of gold,  
for Sindri's race;  
and another stood  
in Okolnir,  
the Jötuns beer-hall  
which Brimir hight.

42. She saw a hall standing,  
far from the sun,  
in Náströnd;  
its doors are northward turned,  
venom-drops fall  
in through its apertures:  
entwined is that hall  
with serpent's backs.

43. She there saw wading  
the sluggish streams  
bloodthirsty men  
and perjurers,  
and him who the ear beguiles  
of another's wife.  
There Nidhögg sucks  
the corpses of the dead;  
the wolf tears men.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

44. Further forward I see,  
much can I say  
of Ragnarök  
and the gods' conflict.

45. Brothers shall fight,  
and slay each other;  
cousins shall  
kinship violate.  
The earth resounds,  
the giantesses flee;  
no man will  
another spare.

46. Hard is it in the world,  
great whoredom,  
an axe age, a sword age,  
shields will be cloven,  
a wind age, a wolf age,  
ere the world sinks.

47. Mim's sons dance,  
but the central tree takes fire,  
at the resounding  
Gjallar-horn.  
Loud blows Heimdall,  
his horn is raised;  
Odin speaks  
with Mim's head.

48. Trembles Yggdrasil's  
ash yet standing;  
groans that aged tree,  
and the jötun is loosed.  
Loud bays Garm  
before the Gnupa-cave,  
his bonds he rends asunder;  
and the wolf runs.

49. Hrym steers from the east,  
the waters rise,  
the mundane snake is coiled  
in jötun-rage.  
The worm beats the water,  
and the eagle screams:  
the pale of beak tears carcasses;  
Naglfar is loosed.

50. That ship fares from the east:  
 come will Muspell's  
 people o'er the sea,  
 and Loki steers.  
 The monster's kin goes  
 all with the wolf;  
 with them the brother is  
 of Byleist on their course.

51. Surt from the south comes  
 with flickering flame;  
 shines from his sword  
 the Val-god's sun.  
 The stony hills are dashed together,  
 the giantesses totter;  
 men tread the path of Hel,  
 and heaven is cloven.

52. How is it with the Æsir?  
 How with the Alfar?  
 All Jötunheim resounds;  
 the Æsir are in council.  
 The dwarfs groan  
 before their stony doors,  
 the sages of the rocky walls.  
 Understand ye yet, or what?

53. Then arises  
 Hlin's second grief,  
 when Odin goes  
 with the wolf to fight,  
 and the bright slayer  
 of Beli with Surt.  
 Then will Frigg's  
 beloved fall.

54. Then comes the great  
victor-sire's son,  
Vidar, to fight  
with the deadly beast.  
He with his hands will  
make his sword pierce  
to the heart of the giant's son:  
then avenges he his father.

55. Then comes the mighty  
son of Hlódyn:  
(Odin's son goes  
with the monster to fight);  
Midgárd's Veor in his rage  
will slay the worm.  
Nine feet will go  
Fiörgyn's son,  
bowed by the serpent,  
who feared no foe.  
All men will  
their homes forsake.

56. The sun darkens,  
earth in ocean sinks,  
fall from heaven  
the bright stars,  
fire's breath assails  
the all-nourishing tree,  
towering fire plays  
against heaven itself.

57. She sees arise,  
a second time,  
earth from ocean,  
beauteously green,  
waterfalls descending;  
the eagle flying over,  
which in the fell  
captures fish.



58. The Æsir meet  
on Ida's plain,  
and of the mighty  
earth-encirler speak,  
and there to memory call  
their mighty deeds,  
and the supreme god's  
ancient lore.

59. There shall again  
the wondrous  
golden tables  
in the grass be found,  
which in days of old  
had possessed  
the ruler of the gods,  
and Fjölfnir's race.

60. Unsown shall  
the fields bring forth,  
all evil be amended;  
Baldr shall come;  
Hödr and Baldr,  
the heavenly gods,  
Hropt's glorious dwellings shall inhabit.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

61. Then can Hoenir  
choose his lot,  
and the two brother's  
sons inhabit  
the spacious Vindheim.  
Understand ye yet, or what?

62. She a hall sees standing  
than the sun brighter,  
with gold bedecked,  
in Gimill:  
there shall the righteous  
people dwell,  
and for evermore  
happiness enjoy.

64. Then comes the mighty one  
to the great judgement,  
the powerful from above,  
who rules o'er all.  
He shall dooms pronounce,  
and strifes allay,  
holy peace establish,  
which shall ever be.

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65. There comes the dark  
dragon flying from beneath,  
the glistening serpent,  
from Nida-fells.  
On his wings bears Nidhög,  
flying o'er the plain,  
a corpse.  
Now she will descend.

## Vafþrúðnismál: The lay of Vafthrudnir

Odin visits the Giant (*Jötun*) Vafthrudnir, for the purpose of proving his knowledge. They propose questions relative to the Cosmogony of the Northern creed, on the condition that the baffled party forfeit his head. The Jötun incurs the penalty.

Odin

1. Counsel thou me now, Frigg!  
as I long to go  
Vafthrudnir to visit;  
great desire, I say,  
I have, in ancient lore  
with that all-wise Jötun to contend.

Frigg

2. At home to bide  
Hærfather I would counsel,  
in the gods' dwellings;  
because no Jötun  
is, I believe, so mighty  
as is Vafthrudnir.

Odin

3. Much have I journeyed,  
much experienced,  
mighty ones many proved;  
but this I fain would know,  
how in Vafthrudnir's  
halls it is.

Frigg

4. In safety mayest thou go,  
in safety return,  
in safety on thy journeyings be;  
may thy wit avail thee,  
when thou, father of men! shalt  
hold converse with the Jötun.

5. Then went Odin  
 the lore to prove  
 of that all-wise Jötun.  
 To the hall he came  
 which Im's father owned.  
 Ygg went forthwith in.

Odin

6. Hail to thee, Vafthrudnir!  
 to thy hall I am now come,  
 thyself to see;  
 for I fain would know,  
 whether thou art a cunning  
 and all-wise Jötun.

Vafthrudnir

7. What man is this,  
 that in my habitation  
 by word addresses me?  
 Out thou goest not  
 from our halls,  
 if thou art not the wiser.

Odin

8. Gagnrad is my name,  
 from my journey I am come  
 thirsty to thy halls,  
 needing hospitality,  
 for I long have journeyed  
 and kind reception from thee, Jötun!

Vafthrudnir

9. Why then, Gagnrad!  
 speakest thou from the floor?  
 Take in the hall a seat;  
 then shall be proved  
 which knows most,  
 the guest or the ancient talker.

Gagnrad

10. A poor man should,  
 who to a rich man comes,  
 speak usefully or hold his tongue:  
 over-much talk  
 brings him, I ween, no good,  
 who visits an austere man.

Vafthrudnir

11. Tell me, Gagnrad!  
 since on the floor thou wilt  
 prove thy proficiency,  
 how the horse is called  
 that draws each day  
 forth over human kind?

Gagnrad

12. Skinfaxi he is named,  
 that the bright day draws  
 forth over human kind.  
 Of coursers he is best accounted  
 among the Reid-goths.  
 Ever sheds light that horse's mane.

Vafthrudnir

13. Tell me now, Gagnrad!  
 since on the floor thou wilt  
 prove thy proficiency,  
 how that steed is called,  
 which from the east draws night  
 o'er the beneficent powers?

Gagnrad

14. Hrimfaxi he is called,  
 that each night draws forth  
 over the beneficent powers.  
 He from his bit lets fall  
 drops every morn,  
 whence in the dales comes dew.

Vafthrudnir

15. Tell me, Gagnrad!  
 since on the floor thou wilt  
 prove thy proficiency,  
 how the stream is called,  
 which earth divides between  
 the Jötuns and the Gods?

Gagnrad

16. Ifing the stream is called  
 which earth divides between  
 the Jötuns and the Gods:  
 open shall it run  
 throughout all time.  
 On that stream no ice shall be.

Vafthrudnir

17. Tell me, Gagnrad!  
 since on the floor thou wilt  
 prove thy proficiency,  
 how that plain is called,  
 where in fight shall meet  
 Surt and the gentle Gods?

Gagnrad

18. Vigríð the plain is called,  
 where in fight shall meet  
 Surt and the gentle Gods;  
 a hundred rasts it is  
 on every side.  
 That plain is to them decreed.

Vafthrudnir

19. Wise art thou, o guest!  
 Approach the Jötuns bench,  
 and sitting let us together talk:  
 we will our heads  
 in the hall pledge,  
 guest! for wise utterance.

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Gagnrad

20. Tell me first,  
if thy wit suffices,  
and thou, Vafthrudnir! knowest,  
whence first came the earth,  
and the high heaven,  
thou, sagacious Jötun?

Vafthrudnir

21. From Ymir's flesh  
the earth was formed,  
and from his bones the hills,  
the heaven from the skull  
of that ice-cold giant,  
and from his blood the sea.

Gagnrad

22. Tell me secondly,  
if thy wit suffices,  
and thou, Vafthrudnir! knowest,  
whence came the moon,  
which over mankind passes,  
and the sun likewise?

Vafthrudnir

23. Mundilfoeri hight he,  
who the moon's father is,  
and eke the sun's:  
round heaven journey  
each day they must,  
to count years for men.

Gagnrad

24. Tell me thirdly,  
since thou art called wise,  
and if thou, Vafthrudnir! knowest,  
whence came the day,  
which over people passes,  
and night with waning moons?

Vafthrudnir

25. Delling hight he  
 who the day's father is,  
 but night was of Nörvi born;  
 the new and waning moons  
 the beneficent powers created,  
 to count years for men.

Gagnrad

26. Tell me fourthly,  
 since they pronounce thee sage,  
 and if thou, Vafthrudnir! knowest,  
 whence winter came,  
 and warm summer  
 first among the wise gods?

Vafthrudnir

27. Vindsval hight he,  
 who winter's father is,  
 and Svasud summer's;  
 yearly they both  
 shall ever journey,  
 until the powers perish.

Gagnrad

28. Tell me fifthly,  
 since they pronounce thee sage,  
 and if thou, Vafthrudnir! knowest,  
 which of the Æsir earliest,  
 or of Ymir's sons  
 in days of old existed?

Vafthrudnir

29. Countless winters,  
 ere earth was formed,  
 was Bergelmir born;  
 Thrudgelmir  
 was his sire,  
 his grandsire Aurgelmir.



Gagnrad

30. Tell me sixthly,  
 since thou art called wise,  
 and if thou, Vafthrudnir! knowest,  
 whence first came Aurgelmir,  
 among the Jötun's sons,  
 thou sagacious Jötun?

Vafthrudnir

31. From Elivagar  
 sprang venom drops,  
 which grew till they became a Jötun;  
 but sparks flew  
 from the south-world:  
 to the ice the fire gave life.

Gagnrad

32. Tell me seventhly,  
 since thou art called wise,  
 and if thou knowest, Vafthrudnir!  
 how he children begat,  
 the bold Jötun,  
 as he had no giantess's company?

Vafthrudnir

33. Under the armpit grew,  
 'tis said, of the Hrimthurs,  
 a girl and boy together;  
 foot with foot begat,  
 of that wise Jötun,  
 a six-headed son.

Gagnrad

34. Tell me eighthly,  
 since thou art called wise,  
 and if thou knowest, Vafthrudnir!  
 what thou doest first remember,  
 or earliest knowest?  
 Thou art an all-wise Jötun.

Vafthrudnir

35. Countless winters,  
ere earth was formed,  
Bergelmir was born.  
That I first remember,  
when that wise Jötun  
in an ark was laid.

Gagnrad

36. Tell me ninthly,  
since thou art called wise,  
and if thou knowest, Vafthrudnir!  
whence the wind comes,  
that over ocean passes,  
itself invisible to man?

Vafthrudnir

37. Hræsvelg he is called,  
who at the end of heaven sits,  
a Jötun in an eagle's plumage:  
from his wings comes,  
it is said, the wind,  
that over all men passes.

Gagnrad

38. Tell me tenthly,  
since thou all the origin  
of the gods knowest, Vafthrudnir!  
whence Niörd came  
among the Æsir's sons?  
O'er fanes and offer-steads  
he rules by hundreds,  
yet was not among the Æsir born.

Vafthrudnir

39. In Vanaheim  
wise powers him created,  
and to the gods a hostage gave.  
At the world's dissolution  
he will return  
to the wise Vanir.

Gagnrad

40. Tell me eleventhly,  
 since all the condition  
 of the gods thou knowest, Vafthrudnir!  
 what the Einherjar do  
 in Hærfather's halls,  
 until the powers perish?

Vafthrudnir

41. All the Einherjar  
 in Odin's halls  
 each day together fight;  
 the fallen they choose,  
 and from the conflict ride;  
 beer with the Æsir drink,  
 of Sæhrimnir eat their fill,  
 then sit in harmony together.

Gagnrad

42. Tell me twelfthly,  
 as thou all the condition  
 of the gods knowest, Vafthrudnir!  
 of the Jötuns' secrets,  
 and of all the gods',  
 say what truest is,  
 thou all-knowing Jötun!

Vafthrudnir

43. Of the secrets of the Jötuns  
 and of all the gods,  
 I can truly tell;  
 for I have over  
 each world travelled;  
 to nine worlds I came,  
 to Niflhel beneath:  
 here die men from Hel.

Gagnrad

44. Much have I journeyed,  
 much experienced,  
 mighty ones many proved.  
 What mortals will live,  
 when the great "Fimbulwinter"  
 shall from men have passed?

Vafthrudnir

45. Lif and Lifthrasir;  
 but they will be concealed  
 in Hoddmimir's holt.  
 The morning dews  
 they will have for food.  
 From them shall men be born.

Gagnrad

46. Much have I journeyed,  
 much experienced,  
 mighty ones many proved.  
 Whence will come the sun  
 in that fair heaven,  
 when Fenrir has this devoured?

Vafthrudnir

47. A daughter shall  
 Alfrödull bear,  
 ere Fenrir shall have swallowed her.  
 The maid shall ride,  
 when the powers die,  
 on her mother's course.

Gagnrad

48. Much have I journeyed, (etc.)  
 who are the maidens  
 that o'er the ocean travel,  
 wise of spirit, journey?

Vafthrudnir

49. O'er people's dwellings three descend  
of Mōgthrasir's maidens,  
the sole Hamingiur  
who are in the world,  
although with Jötuns nurtured.

Gagnrad

50. Much have I journeyed, (etc.)  
Which of the Æsir will rule o'er the gods' possession,  
when Surt's fire shall be quenched?

Vafthrudnir

51. Vidar and Vali  
will the gods' holy fanes inhabit,  
when Surt's fire shall be quenched.  
Modi and Magni will  
Mjöllnir possess,  
and warfare strive to end.

Gagnrad

52. Much have I journeyed, (etc.)  
What of Odin will  
the life's end be,  
when the powers perish?

Vafthrudnir

53. The wolf will  
the father of men devour;  
him Vidar will avenge:  
he his cold jaws will cleave,  
in conflict with the wolf.

Gagnrad

54. Much have I journeyed, (etc.)  
What said Odin  
in his son's ear,  
ere he on the pile was laid?

Vafthrudnir

55. That no one knoweth,  
what thou in days of old  
saidst in thy son's ear.

With dying mouth  
my ancient saws I have said,  
and the gods' destruction.

With Odin I have contended  
in wise utterances:  
of men thou ever art the wisest!

# Grímnismál: The Lay of Grímnir

The subject is wholly mythological

King Hraudung had two sons, one named Agnar, the other Geirröd. Agnar was ten, and Geirröd eight winters old. They both rowed out in a boat, with their hooks and lines, to catch small fish; but the wind drove them out to sea. In the darkness of the night they were wrecked on the shore, and went up into the country, where they found a cottager, with whom they stayed through the winter. The cottager's wife brought up Agnar, and the cottager, Geirröd, and gave him good advice. In the spring the man got them a ship; but when he and his wife accompanied them to the strand, the man talked apart with Geirröd. They had a fair wind, and reached their father's place. Geirröd was at the ship's prow: he sprang on shore, but pushed the ship out, saying, "Go where an evil spirit may get thee." The vessel was driven out to sea, but Geirröd went up to the town, where he was well received; but his father was dead. Geirröd was then taken for king, and became a famous man.

Odin and Frigg were sitting in Hlidskialf, looking over all the world. Odin said, "Seest thou Agnar, thy foster-son, where he is getting children with a giantess in a cave? while Geirröd, my foster-son, is a king residing in his country." Frigg answered, "He is so inhospitable that he tortures his guests, if he thinks too many come." Odin replied that that was the greatest falsehood; and they wagered thereupon. Frigg sent her waiting-maid Fulla to bid Geirröd be on his guard, lest the trollmann who was coming should do him harm, and also say that a token whereby he might be known was, that no dog, however fierce, would attack him. But that King Geirröd was not hospitable was mere idle talk. He, nevertheless, caused the man to be secured whom no dog would assail. He was clad in a blue cloak, and was named Grímnir, and would say no more concerning himself, although he was questioned. The king ordered him to be tortured to make him confess, and to be set between two fires; and there he sat for eight nights. King Geirröd had a son ten years old, whom he named Agnar, after his brother. Agnar went to Grímnir and gave him a full horn to drink from, saying that the king did wrong in causing him to be tortured, though innocent. Grímnir drank from it. The fire had then so approached him that his cloak was burnt; whereupon he said: -

1. Fire! thou art hot,  
and much too great;  
flame! let us separate.  
My garment is singed,  
although I lift it up,  
my cloak is scorched before it.

2. Eight nights have I sat  
 between fires here,  
 and to me no one  
 food has offered,  
 save only Agnar,  
 the son of Geirröd,  
 who alone shall rule  
 over the land of the Goths.

3. Be thou blessed, Agnar!  
 as blessed as the god of men  
 bids thee to be.  
 For one draught  
 thou never shalt  
 get better recompense.

4. Holy is the land,  
 which I see lying  
 to Æsir and Alfar near;  
 but in Thrundheim  
 Thor shall dwell  
 until the powers perish.

5. Ydalir it is called,  
 where Ullr has  
 himself a dwelling made.  
 Alfheim the gods to Frey  
 gave in days of yore  
 for a tooth-gift.

6. The third dwelling is,  
 where the kind powers have  
 with silver decked the hall;  
 Valaskjalf 'tis called,  
 which for himself acquired  
 the Ás in days of old.

7. Sökkvabekk the fourth is named  
 o'er which  
 the gelid waves resound;  
 Odin and Saga there,  
 joyful each day,  
 from golden beakers quaff.



8. Gladsheim the fifth is named,  
there the golden-bright  
Valhall stands spacious,  
there Hropt selects  
each day those men  
who die by weapons.

9. Easily to be known is,  
by those who to Odin come,  
the mansion by its aspect.  
Its roof with spears is laid,  
its hall with shields is decked,  
with corslets are its benches strewed.

10. Easily to be known is,  
by those who to Odin come,  
the mansion by its aspect.  
A wolf hangs  
before the western door,  
over it an eagle hovers.

11. Thrymheim the sixth is named,  
where Thiassi dwelt,  
that all-powerful Jötun;  
but Skadi now inhabits,  
the bright bride of the gods,  
her father's ancient home.

12. Breidablik is the seventh,  
where Baldr has  
built for himself a hall,  
in that land,  
in which I know exists  
the fewest crimes.

13. Himinbjörg is the eighth,  
where Heimdall, it is said,  
rules o'er the holy fanes:  
there the gods' watchman,-  
in his tranquil home,  
drinks joyful the good mead.

14. Folkvang is the ninth,  
there Freyja directs  
the sittings in the hall.  
She half the fallen chooses each day,  
but Odin th' other half.

15. Glitnir is the tenth;  
it is on gold sustained,  
and eke with silver decked.  
There Forseti dwells  
throughout all time,  
and every strife allays.

16. Noatun is the eleventh,  
there Niörd has  
himself a dwelling made,  
prince of men;  
guiltless of sin,  
he rules o'er the high-built fane.

17. O'ergrown with branches  
and high grass  
is Vidar's spacious Landvidi:  
There will the son descend,  
from the steed's back,  
bold to avenge his father.

18. Andhrimnir makes,  
in Eldhrimnir,  
Sæhrimnir to boil,  
of meats the best;  
but few know how many  
Einherjar it feeds.

19. Geri and Freki  
the war-wont sates,  
the triumphant sire of hosts;  
but on wine only  
the famed in arms,  
Odin, ever lives.

20. Hugin and Munin  
fly each day  
over the spacious earth.  
I fear for Hugin,  
that he come not back,  
yet more anxious am I for Munin.

21. Thund roars;  
joyful in Thiodvitnir's  
water lives the fish;  
the rapid river  
seems too great  
for the battle-steed to ford.

22. Valgrind is the lattice called,  
in the plain that stands,  
holy before the holy gates:  
ancient is that lattice,  
but few only know  
how it is closed with lock.

23. Five hundred doors,  
and forty eke, I think,  
are in Valhall.  
Eight hundred Einherjar  
will at once from each door go  
when they issue with the wolf to fight.

34. Five hundred floors,  
and forty eke, I think,  
has Bilskirnir with its windings.  
Of all the roofed  
houses that I know,  
is my son's the greatest.

25. Heidrun the goat is called,  
that stands o'er Odin's hall,  
and bites from Lærad's branches.  
He a bowl shall fill  
with the bright mead;  
that drink shall never fail.

26. Eikthyrnir the hart is called,  
 that stands o'er Odin's hall,  
 and bites from Lærad's branches;  
 from his horns fall  
 drops into Hvergelmir,  
 whence all waters rise:-

27. Sid and Vid,  
 Soekin and Eikin,  
 Svöl and Gunntro,  
 Fiörm and Fimbulthul,  
 Rin and Rennandi,  
 Gipul and Göpul,  
 Gömul and Geirvimul:  
 they round the gods' dwellings wind.  
 Thyn and Vin,  
 Thöll and Höll,  
 Grad and Gunnthorin.

28. Vina one is called,  
 a second Vegsvin,  
 a third Thiodnuma;  
 Nyt and Nöt,  
 Nön and Hrön,  
 Slid and Hrid,  
 Sylg and Ylg,  
 Vid and Van,  
 Vönd and Strönd,  
 Giöll and Leipt;  
 these (two) fall near to men,  
 but fall hence to Hel,

29. Körmt and Örmt,  
 and the Kerlaugs twain:  
 these Thor must wade each day,  
 when he to council goes  
 at Yggdrasil's ash;  
 for the As-bridge  
 is all on fire,  
 the holy waters boil.

30. Glad and Gyllir,  
 Gler and Skeidbrimir,  
 Sillfrintopp and Sinir,  
 Gisl and Falhofnir,  
 Gulltopp and Lettfeti;  
 on these steeds the Æsir  
 each day ride,  
 when they to council go,  
 at Yggdrasil's ash.

31. Three roots stand  
 on three ways  
 under Yggdrasil's ash:  
 Hel under one abides,  
 under the second the Hrimthursar,  
 under the third mankind.

32. Ratatösk is the squirrel named,  
 which has to run  
 in Yggdrasil's ash;  
 he from above  
 the eagle's words must carry,  
 and beneath to Nidhögg repeat.

33. Harts there are also four,  
 which from its summits,  
 arch-necked, gnaw.  
 Dain and Dvalin,  
 Duneyr and Durathror.

34. More serpents lie  
 under Yggdrasil's ash,  
 than any one would think  
 of witless mortals:  
 Goin and Moin  
 they are Grafvitnir's sons  
 Grabak and Grafvöllud,  
 Ofnir and Svafnir,  
 will, I ween,  
 the branches of that tree  
 ever lacerate.

35. Yggdrasil's ash  
 hardship suffers  
 greater than men know of;  
 a hart bites it above,  
 and in its side it rots,  
 Nidhögg beneath tears it.

36. Hrist and Mist  
 the horn shall bear me  
 Skeggöld and Skögul,  
 Hlökk and Herfjötur,  
 Hildi and Thrudi,  
 Göll and Geirölul,  
 Randgrid and Radgrid,  
 and Reginleif,  
 these bear beer to the Einherjar.

37. Arvakr and Alsvið,  
 theirs 'tis up hence  
 fasting the sun to draw:  
 under their shoulder  
 the gentle powers, the Æsir,  
 have concealed an iron-coolness.

38. Svalin the shield is called,  
 which stands before the sun,  
 the refulgent deity:  
 rocks and ocean must, I ween,  
 be burnt,  
 fell it from its place.

39. Sköll the wolf is named,  
 that the fair-faced goddess  
 to the ocean chases;  
 another Hati hight,  
 he is Hroðvitnir's son;  
 he the bright maid of heaven shall precede.

40. Of Ymir's flesh  
 was earth created,  
 of his blood the sea,  
 of his bones the hills,  
 of his hair trees and plants,  
 of his skull the heaven;

41. And of his brows  
 the gentle powers  
 formed Midgard for the sons of men;  
 but of his brain  
 the heavy clouds are  
 all created.

42. Ullr's and all the gods'  
 favour shall have,  
 whoever first shall look to the fire;  
 for open will the dwelling be,  
 to the Æsir's sons,  
 when the kettles are lifted off.<sup>1</sup>

43. Ivald's sons  
 went in days of old  
 Skidbladnir to form,  
 of ships the best,  
 for the bright Frey,  
 Njörd's benign son.

44. Yggdrasil's ash is  
 of all trees most excellent,  
 and of all ships, Skidbladnir,  
 of the Æsir, Odin,  
 and of horses, Sleipnir,  
 Bifröst of bridges,  
 and of skalds, Bragi,  
 Habrok of hawks,  
 and of dogs, Garm, (Brimir of swords.)

1. What in this strophe is said of Ullr has apparently reference to a lost myth. It would seem that, through the intervention of the kettles, the Æsir were unable to see Odin's unpleasant position between the two fires.

45. Now I my face have raised  
 to the gods' triumphant sons,  
 at that will welcome help awake;  
 from all the Æsir,  
 that shall penetrate, to Aegir's bench,  
 to Aegir's comotation.<sup>2</sup>

46. I am called Grim,  
 I am called Gangleri,  
 Herian and Hjalmbéri,  
 Thekk and Thrídi,  
 Thund and Ud,  
 Helblíndi and Har,

47. Sad and Svipall,  
 and Sanngétall,  
 Herteit and Hnikar  
 Bileyg, Baleyg,  
 Bölverk, Fjölnir,  
 Grim and Grímnir,  
 Glapsvíd and Fjölsvíd,

48. Sidhött, Sidskegg  
 Sigfödr, Hnikud,  
 Alfödr, Valfödr,  
 Atrid and Farmatýr;  
 by one name  
 I never have been called,  
 since among men I have gone.

49. Grímnir I am called  
 at Geirröð's,  
 and at Asmund's Jalk  
 and Kíalar, when a sledge I drew;  
 Thrór at the public meetings,  
 Vídur in battles,  
 Oski and Omi,  
 Jafnhar and Biflindi,  
 Göndlir and Harbard with the gods.

2. My version of this strophe is not in accordance with those of other interpreters. Odin raises his countenance to heaven, in full confidence that when seen help will forthwith be afforded him. Under the name of Ægir, Gierrod is generally understood: I rather think the meaning to be, that all the Æsir who [sit at] Ægir's comotation will forthwith come to his aid.



50. Svidur and Svidrir  
 I was at Sökkmimir's called,  
 and beguiled that ancient Jötun,  
 when of Midvitnir's  
 renowned son  
 I was the sole destroyer.

51. Drunken art thou, Geirröd,  
 thou hast drunk too much,  
 thou art greatly by mead beguiled.  
 Much didst thou lose,  
 when thou wast  
 of my help bereft,  
 of all the Einherjar's  
 and Odin's favour.

52. Many things I told thee,  
 but thou hast few remembered:  
 thy friends mislead thee.  
 My friend's sword  
 lying I see,  
 with blood all dripping.

53. The fallen by the sword  
 Ygg shall now have;  
 thy life is now run out:  
 Wroth with thee are the Disir:  
 Odin thou now shalt see:  
 draw near to me if thou canst.

54. Odin I now am named,  
 Ygg I was called before,  
 before that, Thund,  
 Vakr and Skilfing,  
 Vafudr and Hroptatyr,  
 with the gods, Gaut and Jalk,  
 Ofnir and Svafnir,  
 all which I believe to be names of me alone.

King Geirröd was sitting with his sword lying across his knees, half drawn from the scabbard, but

on finding that it was Odin, he rose for the purpose of removing him from the fires, when the sword slipt from his hand with the hilt downwards; and the king having stumbled, the sword pierced him through and killed him. Odin then vanished, and Agnar was king for a long time after.

## Hrafnagaldr Odins: Odin's Ravens' Song

This very obscure poem has been regarded as a fragment only of a poem, of which the beginning and end are wanting. With regard to the beginning, the want may possibly be more apparent than real; the strophes 2-5 being in fact a sort of introduction, although they do not at first strike us as such, in consequence of the obscurity of the 1<sup>st</sup> strophe, which seems very slightly connected with the following ones, in which the gods and dwarfs are described as in council, on account of certain warnings and forebodings of their approaching downfall, or Ragnarök. Another point of difficulty is its title, there being nothing in the whole poem to connect it with Odin's ravens, except the mention of Hugn (Hugin) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> strophe. Erik Halson, a learned Icclander, after having spent or wasted ten years in an attempt to explain this poem, confessed that he understood little or nothing of it. In its mythology, too, we find parts assigned to some of the personages, of which no traces occur in either Sæmunds' or Snorri's Edda; though we are hardly justified in pronouncing it, with more than one scholar of eminence, a fabrication of later times.

1. Alfater works,  
the Alfar discern,  
the Vanir know,  
the Nornir indicate,  
the Ividia brings forth,  
men endure,  
the Thursar await,  
the Valkyriur long.

2. The forebodings the Æsir  
suspected to be evil;  
treacherous Vættar had  
the runes confounded.  
Urd was enjoined  
to guard Odhroerir,  
powerfully to protect it  
against the increasing multitude.

3. Hug then goes forth,  
explores the heavens,  
the powers fear  
disaster from delay.  
'Twas Thrain's belief  
that the dream was ominous;  
Dain's thought that  
the dream was dark.

4. Among the dwarfs  
 virtue decays;  
 worlds sink down  
 to Ginnung's abyss.  
 Oft will Asvid  
 strike them down,  
 oft the fallen  
 again collect.

5. Stand no longer shall  
 earth or sun.  
 The stream of air  
 with corruption laden  
 shall not cease.  
 Hidden is in Mim's  
 limpid well  
 men's certain knowledge.  
 Understand ye yet, or what?  
 \*\*\*\*\*

6. In the dales dwells  
 the prescient Dis,  
 from Yggdrasil's  
 ash sunk down,  
 of alfen race,  
 Idun by name,  
 the youngest of Ivaldi's  
 elder children.

7. She ill brooked  
 her descent,  
 under the hoar tree's  
 trunk confined.  
 She would not happy be  
 with Nörvi's daughter,  
 accustomed to a pleasanter  
 abode at home.

8. The triumphant gods saw  
Nanna sorrowing  
in earth's deep sanctuaries;  
a wolf's skin they gave her,  
in which herself she clad,  
changed her feelings,  
practised guile,  
alter'd her aspect.

9. Vidrir selected  
Bifröst's guardian,  
of the Giöll-sun's  
keeper to inquire  
all that she knew  
of every world;  
Bragi and Lopt  
should witness bear.

10. Magic songs they sung,  
rode on wolves  
the god and gods.  
At the heavenly house,  
Odin listened,  
in Hlidskjalf;  
let them go forth  
on their long way.

11. The wise god asked  
the cupbearer  
of the gods' progeny  
and their associates,  
whether of heaven, or Hel,  
or earth, she knew  
the origin, duration,  
or dissolution?

12. She spoke not,  
she could no words  
to the anxious gods  
bring forth,  
nor a sound uttered;  
tears flowed from the head's orbs;  
with pain repressed  
they flow anew.

13. As from the east,  
from Elivagar,  
the thorn is impelled by  
the ice-cold Thurs,  
wherewith Dain  
all people strikes  
over the fair mid-earth;

14. When every faculty is lulled,  
the hands sink,  
totters with drowsiness  
the bright, sword-girt Ás;  
drives away the current  
the giantess's blandishment  
of the mind's agitations  
of all people,

15. So to the gods appeared  
Jorun to be affected,  
with sorrows swollen,  
when they no answer got;  
they strove the more  
the greater the repulse;  
still less than they had hoped  
did their words prevail.

16. When the leader  
of the inquiring travellers,  
the guardian of Herian's  
loud-sounding horn  
took the son of Nal  
for his companion,  
Grimnir's skald  
at the place kept watch.

17. Vingolf reached  
Vidur's ministers,  
both borne  
by Forniots kin.  
They entered,  
and the Æsir  
forthwith saluted,  
at Ygg's convivial meeting.

18. Hangatyr they hailed,  
of Æsir the most blissful;  
potent drink in the high seat  
they wished him to enjoy,  
and the gods to sit  
happy at the feast,  
ever with Yggiung  
pleasure to share.

19. On benches seated,  
at Bölverk's bidding,  
the company of gods  
were with Sæhrimnir sated.  
Skögul at the tables,  
from Hnikar's vessel,  
measured out mead,  
in Mimir's horns.

20. Of many thing inquired,  
when the meal was over,  
the high gods of Heimdall,  
the goddesses of Loki,  
whether the maid had uttered  
divinations or wise words?  
From noon  
until twilight's advent.

21. Ill they showed  
it had fallen out,  
their errand bootless,  
little to glory in.  
A lack of counsel  
seemed likely,  
how from the maiden they  
might an answer get.

22. Omi answered;  
“Night is the time  
for new counsels;  
till the morrow let reflect  
each one competent  
to give advice  
helpful to the Æsir.”

23. Ran along the ways  
of mother Rind,  
the desired repast  
of Fenrisulf.  
Went from the guild,  
bade the gods farewell  
Hropt and Frigg,  
as, before Hrimfaxi,

24. The son of Delling  
urged on his horse  
adorned with  
precious jewels.  
Over Mannheim shines  
the horse's mane,  
the steed Dvalin's deluder  
drew in his chariot.

25. In the north boundary  
of the spacious earth,  
under the outmost root  
of the noble tree,  
went to their couches  
Gygiar and Thursar,  
spectres, dwarfs,  
and Murk Alfs.



26. The powers rose,  
the Alfs' illuminator  
northwards towards Niflheim  
chased the night.  
Up Argjöll ran  
Ulfrun's son,  
the mighty hornblower,  
of heaven's heights.



# Vegtamskvíða eða Baldrs Draumar

## The Lay of Vegtam, or Baldr's Dreams

1. Together were the Æsir  
all in council,  
and the Asyniur  
all in conference,  
and they consulted,  
the mighty gods,  
why Baldr had  
oppressive dreams.

2. To that god his slumber  
was most afflicting;  
his auspicious dreams  
seemed departed.  
They the Jötuns questioned,  
wise seers of the future,  
whether this might not  
forebode calamity?

3. The responses said  
that to death destined was  
Ullr's kinsman,  
of all the dearest:  
that caused grief  
to Frigg and Svafnir,  
and to the other powers  
On a course they resolved:

4. That they would send  
to every being,  
assurance to solicit,  
Baldr not to harm.  
All species swore  
oaths to spare him;  
Frigg received all  
their vows and compacts.

5. Valfather fears  
something defective;  
he thinks the Hamingiur  
may have departed;  
the Æsir he convenes,  
their counsel craves;  
at the deliberation  
much is devised.

6. Uprose Odin  
lord of men,  
and on Sleipnir he  
the saddle laid;  
rode thence down  
to Niflhel.  
A dog he met,  
from Hel coming.

7. It was blood-stained  
on its breast,  
on its slaughter-craving throat,  
and nether jaw.  
It bayed  
and widely gaped  
at the sire of magic song:  
long it howled.

8. Forth rode Odin  
the ground rattled  
till to Hel's lofty  
house he came.  
Then rode Ygg  
to the eastern gate,  
where he knew there was  
a Vala's grave.

9. To the prophetess he began  
 a magic song to chant,  
 towards the north looked,  
 potent runes applied,  
 a spell pronounced,  
 an answer demanded,  
 until compelled she rose,  
 and with deathlike voice she said:

Vala

10. "What man is this,  
 to me unknown  
 who has for me increased  
 an irksome course?  
 I have with snow been decked  
 by rain beaten,  
 and with dew moistened:  
 long have I been dead."

Vegtam

11. "Vegtam is my name,  
 I am Valtam's son.  
 Tell thou me of Hel:  
 from earth I call on thee.  
 For whom are those benches  
 strewed o'er with rings,  
 those costly couches  
 o'erlaid with gold?"

Vala

12. "Here stands mead,  
 for Baldr brewed,  
 over the bright potion  
 a shield is laid;  
 but the Æsir race  
 are in despair.  
 By compulsion I have spoken  
 I will now be silent."

Vegtam

13. "Be thou not silent, Vala!  
I will question thee,  
until I know all.  
I will yet know  
who will Baldr's  
slayer be,  
and Odin's son  
of life bereave."

Vala

14. "Hödr will hither  
his glorious brother send,  
he of Baldr will  
the slayer be,  
and Odin's son  
of life bereave.  
By compulsion I have spoken;  
I will now be silent."

Vegtam

15. "Be not silent, Vala!  
I will question thee,  
until I know all.  
I will yet know  
who on Hödr vengeance  
will inflict  
or Baldr's slayer  
raise on the pile."

Vala

16. "Rind a son shall bear,  
in the western halls:  
he shall slay Odin's son,  
when one night old.  
He a hand will not wash,  
nor his head comb,  
ere he to the pile has borne  
Baldr's adversary.  
By compulsion I have spoken;  
I will now be silent."

Vegtam

17. "Be not silent, Vala!  
I will question thee,  
until I know all.  
I will yet know  
who the maidens are,  
that weep at will,  
and heavenward cast  
their neck-veils?  
Tell me but that:  
till then thou sleepest not."

Vala

18. "Not Vegtam art thou,  
as I before believed;  
rather art thou Odin,  
lord of men!"

Odin

19. "Thou art no Vala,  
nor wise woman,  
rather art thou the mother  
of three Thursar."

Vala

20. "Home ride thou, Odin!  
and exult.  
Thus shall never more  
man again visit me,  
until Loki free  
from his bonds escapes,  
and Ragnarök  
all-destroying comes."





## Hávamál: The High One's Lay

1. All door-ways,  
before going forward,  
should be looked to;  
for difficult it is to know  
where foes may sit  
within a dwelling.

2. Givers, hail!  
A guest is come in:  
where shall he sit?  
In much haste is he,  
who on the ways has  
to try his luck.

3. Fire is needful  
to him who is come in,  
and whose knees are frozen;  
food and raiment  
a man requires,  
who o'er the fell has travelled.

4. Water to him is needful  
who for refection comes,  
a towel and hospitable invitation,  
a good reception;  
if he can get it,  
discourse and answer.

5. Wit is needful  
to him who travels far:  
at home all is easy.  
A laughing-stock is he  
who nothing knows,  
and with the instructed sits.

Odin is the “*High One*.” The poem is a collection of rules and maxims, and stories of himself, some of them not very consistent with our ideas of a supreme deity.

6. Of his understanding  
 no one should be proud,  
 but rather in conduct cautious.  
 When the prudent and taciturn  
 come to a dwelling,  
 harm seldom befalls the cautious;  
 for a firmer friend  
 no man ever gets  
 than great sagacity.

7. A way guest<sup>1</sup>  
 who to refection comes,  
 keeps a cautious silence,  
 (Or/Wit is needful  
 to him who travels far:  
 harm seldom befalls the wary;)  
 with his ears listens,  
 and with his eyes observes:  
 so explores every prudent man.

8. He is happy,  
 who for himself obtains  
 fame and kind words:  
 less sure is that  
 which a man must have  
 in another's breast.

9. He is happy,  
 who in himself possesses  
 fame and wit while living;  
 for bad counsels  
 have oft been received  
 from another's breast.

1. In the Copenhagen paper Ms. F. this strophe begins with the following three lines: —

Wit is needful  
 to him who travels far:  
 harm seldom befalls the wary:

They are printed in the Stockholm edition of the original Afzelius and Rask, and in the Swedish translations by Afzelius.

10. A better burthen  
 no man bears on the way  
 than much good sense;  
 that is thought better than riches  
 in a strange place;  
 such is the recourse of the indigent.

11. A worse provision  
 on the way he cannot carry  
 than too much beer-bibbing;  
 so good is not,  
 as it is said,  
 beer for the sons of men.

12. A worse provision  
 no man can take from table  
 than too much beer-bibbing;  
 for the more he drinks  
 the less control he has  
 of his own mind.

13. Oblivion's heron 'tis called  
 that over potations hovers,  
 he steals the minds of men.  
 With this bird's pinions  
 I was fettered  
 in Gunnlöð's dwelling.

14. Drunk I was,  
 I was over-drunk,  
 at that cunning Fjalar's.  
 It's the best drunkenness,  
 when every one after it  
 regains his reason.

15. Taciturn and prudent,  
 and in war daring  
 should a king's children be;  
 joyous and liberal  
 every one should be  
 until the hour of his death.

16. A cowardly man  
thinks he will ever live,  
if warfare he avoids;  
but old age will  
give him no peace,  
though spears may spare him.

17. A fool gapes  
when to a house he comes,  
to himself mutters or is silent;  
but all at once,  
if he gets drink,  
then is the man's mind displayed.

18. He alone knows  
who wanders wide,  
and has much experienced,  
by what disposition  
each man is ruled,  
who common sense possesses.

19. Let a man hold the cup,  
yet of the mead drink moderately,  
speak sensibly or be silent.  
As of a fault  
no man will admonish thee,  
if thou goest betimes to sleep.

20. A greedy man,  
if he be not moderate,  
eats to his mortal sorrow.  
Oftentimes his belly  
draws laughter on a silly man,  
who among the prudent comes.

21. Cattle know  
when to go home,  
and then from grazing cease;  
but a foolish man  
never knows  
his stomach's measure.

22. A miserable man,  
and ill-conditioned,  
sneers at every thing;  
one thing he knows not,  
which he ought to know,  
that he is not free from faults.

23. A foolish man  
is all night awake,  
pondering over everything;  
he then grows tired;  
and when morning comes,  
all is lament as before.

24. A foolish man  
thinks all who on him smile  
to be his friends;  
he feels it not,  
although they speak ill of him,  
when he sits among the clever.

25. A foolish man  
thinks all who speak him fair  
to be his friends;  
but he will find,  
if into court he comes,  
that he has few advocates.

26. A foolish man  
thinks he know everything  
if placed in unexpected difficulty;  
but he knows not  
what to answer,  
if to the test he is put.

27. A foolish man,  
who among people comes,  
had best be silent;  
for no one knows  
that he knows nothing,  
unless he talks to much.  
He who previously knew nothing

will still know nothing  
talk he ever so much.

28. He thinks himself wise,  
who can ask questions  
and converse also;  
conceal his ignorance  
no one can,  
because it circulates among men.

29. He utters too many  
futile words  
who is never silent;  
a garrulous tongue,  
if it be not checked,  
sings often to its own harm.

30. For a gazing-stock  
no man shall have another,  
although he come a stranger to his house.  
Many a one thinks himself wise,  
if he is not questioned,  
and can sit in a dry habit.

31. Clever thinks himself  
the guest who jeers a guest,  
if he takes to flight.  
Knows it not certainly  
he who prates at meat,  
whether he babbles among foes.

32. Many men  
are mutually well-disposed,  
yet at table will torment each other.  
That strife will ever be;  
guest will guest irritate.

33. Early meals  
a man should often take,  
unless to a friend's house he goes;  
else he will sit and mope,  
will seem half-famished,  
and can of few things inquire.

34. Long is and indirect the way  
to a bad friend's,  
though by the road he dwell;  
but to a good friend's  
the paths lie direct,  
though he be far away.

35. A guest should depart,  
not always stay  
in one place.  
The welcome becomes unwelcome,  
if he too long continues  
in another's house.

36. One's own house is best,  
small though it be;  
at home is every one his own master.  
Though he but two goats possess,  
and a straw-thatched cot,  
even that is better than begging.

37. One's own house is best,  
small though it be,  
at home is every one his own master.  
Bleeding at heart is he,  
who has to ask  
for food at every meal-tide.

38. Leaving in the field his arms,  
let no man go  
a foot's length forward;  
for it is hard to know  
when on the way  
a man may need his weapon.

39. I have never found a  
man so bountiful,  
or so hospitable  
that he refused a present;  
of his property  
so liberal  
that he scorned a recompense.

40. Of the property  
 which he has gained  
 no man should suffer need;  
 for the hated oft is spared  
 what for the dear was destined.  
 Much goes worse than is expected.

41. With arms and vestments  
 friends should each other gladden,  
 those which are in themselves most sightly.  
 Givers and requiters  
 are longest friends,  
 if all (else) goes well.<sup>2</sup>

42. To his friend  
 a man should be a friend,  
 and gifts with gifts requite.  
 Laughter with laughter  
 men should receive,  
 but leasing with lying.

43. To his friend  
 a man should be a friend,  
 to him and to his friend;  
 but of his foe  
 no man shall  
 the friend's friend be.

44. Know, if thou has a friend  
 whom thou fully trustest,  
 and from whom thou would'st good derive,  
 thou shouldst blend thy mind with his,  
 and gifts exchange,  
 and often go to see him.

45. If thou hast another,  
 whom thou little trustest,  
 yet wouldst good from him derive,  
 thou shouldst speak him fair,  
 but think craftily,  
 and leasing pay with lying.

2. The sense of this line seems doubtful; I have adopted the version of Finn Magnusen.



46. But of him yet further,  
whom thou little trustest,  
and thou suspectest his affection;  
before him thou shouldst laugh,  
and contrary to thy thoughts speak:  
requital should the gift resemble.

47. I was once young,  
I was journeying alone,  
and lost my way;  
rich I thought myself,  
when I met another.  
Man is the joy of man.

48. Liberal and brave men live best,  
they seldom cherish sorrow;  
but a base-minded man  
dreads everything;  
the niggardly is uneasy even at gifts.

49. My garments in a field  
I gave away  
to two wooden men:  
heroes they seemed to be,  
when they got cloaks:  
exposed to insult is a naked man.

50. A tree withers  
that on a hill-top stands;  
protects it neither bark nor leaves:  
such is the man  
whom no one favours:  
why should he live long?

51. Hotter than fire  
love for five days burns  
between false friends;  
but is quenched  
when the sixth day comes,  
and friendship is all impaired.

52. Something great  
is not (always) to be given,  
praise is often for a trifle bought.  
With half a loaf  
and a tilted vessel  
I got myself a comrade.

53. Little are the sand grains,  
little the wits,  
little the minds of (some) men;  
for all men  
are not wise alike:  
men are everywhere by halves.

54. Moderately wise  
should each one be,  
but never over-wise:  
of those men  
the lives are fairest,  
who know much well.

55. Moderately wise  
should each one be,  
but never over-wise;  
for a wise man's heart  
is seldom glad,  
if he is all-wise who owns it.

56. Moderately wise  
should each one be,  
but never over-wise.  
His destiny let know  
no man beforehand;  
his mind will be freest from care.

57. Brand burns from brand  
until it is burnt out;  
fire is from fire quickened.  
Man to man  
becomes known by speech,  
but a fool by his bashful silence.

58. He should early rise,  
 who another's property or life  
 desires to have.  
 Seldom a sluggish wolf  
 gets prey,  
 or a sleeping man victory.

59. Early should rise  
 he who has few workers,  
 and go his work to see to;  
 greatly is he retarded  
 who sleeps the morn away.  
 Wealth half depends on energy.

60. Of dry planks  
 and roof-shingles  
 a man knows the measure;  
 of the fire-wood  
 that may suffice,  
 both measure and time.

61. Washed and refected  
 let a man ride to the Thing,<sup>3</sup>  
 although his garments be not too good;  
 of his shoes and breeches  
 let no one be ashamed,  
 nor of his horse,  
 although he have not a good one.

62. Inquire and impart  
 should every man of sense,  
 who will be accounted sage.  
 Let one only know,  
 a second may not;  
 if three, all the world knows.

63. Gasps and gapes,  
 when to the sea he comes,  
 the eagles over old ocean;  
 so is a man,

who among many comes,  
and has few advocates.

64. His power should  
every sagacious man  
use with discretion;  
for he will find,  
when among the bold he comes,  
that no one alone is the doughtiest.

65. Circumspect and reserved  
every man should be,  
and wary in trusting friends.  
Of the words  
that a man says to another  
he often pays the penalty.

66. Much too early  
I came to many places,  
but too late to others;  
the beer was drunk,  
or not ready:  
the disliked seldom hits the moment.

67. Here and there I should  
have been invited,  
if I a meal had needed;  
or two hams had hung,  
at that true friend's,  
where of one I had eaten.

68. Fire is best  
among the sons of men,  
and the sight of the sun,  
if his health  
a man can have,  
with a life free from vice.

69. No man lacks everything,  
although his health be bad:  
one in his sons is happy,  
one in abundant wealth,  
one in his good works.

70. It is better to live,  
 even to live miserably;  
 a living man can always get a cow.  
 I saw fire consume  
 the rich man's property,  
 and death stood without his door.

71. The halt can ride on horseback,  
 the one-handed drive cattle;  
 the deaf fight and be useful:  
 to be blind is better  
 than to be burnt:<sup>4</sup>  
 no ones gets good from a corpse.

72. A son is better,  
 even if born late,  
 after his father's departure.  
 Gravestones seldom  
 stand by the way-side  
 unless raised by a kinsman to a kinsman.

73. Two are adversaries:  
 the tongue is the bane of the head:  
 under every cloak  
 I expect a hand.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

74. At night is joyful  
 he who is sure of travelling enjoyment.  
 (A ship's yards are short.)<sup>5</sup>  
 Variable is an autumn night.  
 Many are the weather's changes  
 in five days,  
 but more in a month.

4. That is dead on the funeral pyre.

5. This line is evidently an interpolation.

75. He (only) knows not  
 who knows nothing,  
 that many a one apes another.  
 One man is rich,  
 another poor:  
 let him not be thought blameworthy.

76. Cattle die,  
 kindred die,  
 we ourselves also die;  
 but the fair fame  
 never dies  
 of him who has earned it.

77. Cattle die,  
 kindred die,  
 we ourselves also die;  
 but I know one thing  
 that never dies,  
 judgement on each one dead.

78. Full storehouses I saw  
 at Dives' sons':  
 now bear they the beggar's staff.  
 Such are riches;  
 as is the twinkling of an eye:  
 of friends they are most fickle.

79. A foolish man,  
 if he acquires  
 wealth or a woman's love,  
 pride grows within him,  
 but wisdom never:  
 he goes on more and more arrogant.

80. Then 'tis made manifest,  
 if of runes thou questionest him,  
 those to the high ones known,  
 which the great powers invented,  
 and the great talker<sup>c</sup> painted,  
 that he had best hold silence.

81. At eve the day is to be praised,  
a woman after she is burnt,  
a sword after it is proved,  
a maid after she is married,  
ice after it has passed away,  
beer after it is drunk.

82. In the wind one should hew wood,  
in a breeze row out to sea,  
in the dark talk with a lass:  
many are the eyes of day.  
In a ship voyages are to be made,  
but a shield is for protection,  
a sword for striking,  
but a damsel for a kiss.

83. By the fire one should drink beer,  
on the ice slide;  
but a horse that is lean,  
a sword that is rusty;  
feed a horse at home,  
but a dog at the farm.

84. In a maiden's words  
no one should place faith,  
nor in what a woman says;  
for on a turning wheel  
have their hearts been formed,  
and guile in their breasts been laid;

85. In a creaking bow,  
a burning flame,  
a yawning wolf,  
a chattering crow,  
a grunting swine,  
a rootless tree,  
a waxing wave,  
a boiling kettle,

86. A flying dart,  
a falling billow,  
a one night's ice,  
a coiled serpent,  
a woman's bed-talk,  
or a broken sword,  
a bear's play,  
or a royal child,

87. A sick calf,  
a self-willed thrall,  
a flattering prophetess,  
a corpse newly slain,  
(a serene sky,  
a laughing lord,  
a barking dog,  
and a harlot's grief);

88. An early sown field  
let no one trust,  
nor prematurely in a son:  
weather rules the field,  
and wit the son,  
each of which is doubtful;

89. A brother's murderer,  
though on the high road met,  
a half-burnt house,  
an over-swift horse,  
(a horse is useless,  
if a leg be broken),  
no man is so confiding  
as to trust any of these.

90. Such is the love of women,  
who falsehood meditate,  
as if one drove not rough-shod,  
on slippery ice,  
a spirited two-years old  
and unbroken horse;  
or as in a raging storm  
a helmless ship is beaten;



or as if the halt were set to catch  
a reindeer in the thawing fell.<sup>7</sup>

91. Openly I now speak,  
because I both sexes know:  
unstable are men's minds towards women;  
'tis then we speak most fair  
when we most falsely think:  
that deceives even the cautious.

92. Fair shall speak,  
and money offer,  
who would obtain a woman's love.  
Praise the form  
of a fair damsel;  
he gets who courts her.

93. At love should no one  
ever wonder  
in another:  
a beauteous countenance  
oft captivates the wise,  
which captivates not the foolish.

94. Let no one wonder at  
another's folly,  
it is the lot of many.  
All-powerful desire  
makes of the sons of men  
fools even of the wise.

95. The mind only knows  
what lies near the heart,  
that alone is conscious of our affections.  
No disease is worse  
to a sensible man  
than not to be content with himself.

7. From this line it appears that the poem is of Norwegian or Swedish origin, as the reindeer was unknown in Iceland before the middle of the 18th century, when it was introduced by royal command.

96. That I experienced,  
when in the reeds I sat,  
awaiting my delight.  
Body and soul to me  
was that discreet maiden:  
nevertheless I possess her not.

97. Billing's lass<sup>8</sup>  
on her couch I found,  
sun-bright, sleeping.  
A prince's joy  
to me seemed naught,  
if not with that form to live.

98. "Yet nearer eve  
must thou, Odin, come,  
if thou wilt talk the maiden over;  
all will be disastrous,  
unless we alone  
are privy to such misdeed."

99. I returned,  
thinking to love,  
at her wise desire.  
I thought  
I should obtain  
her whole heart and love.

100. When next I came  
the bold warriors were  
all awake,  
with lights burning,  
and bearing torches:  
thus was the way to pleasure closed.

8. The story of Odin and Billing's daughter is no longer extant; but compare the story of Odin and Rinda in Saxo, p. 126, edit. Muller and Veleschow.

101. But at the approach of morn,  
 when again I came,  
 the household all was sleeping;  
 the good damsel's dog  
 alone I found  
 tied to the bed.

102. Many a fair maiden,  
 when rightly known,  
 towards men is fickle:  
 that I experienced,  
 when that discreet maiden I  
 strove to seduce:  
 contumely of every kind  
 that wily girl  
 heaped upon me;  
 nor of that damsel gained I aught.

103. At home let a man be cheerful,  
 and towards a guest liberal;  
 of wise conduct he should be,  
 of good memory and ready speech;  
 if much knowledge he desires,  
 he must often talk on good.

104. Fimbulfambi he is called  
 who little has to say:  
 such is the nature of the simple.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

105. The old Jötun I sought;  
 now I am come back:  
 little got I there by silence;  
 in many words  
 I spoke to my advantage  
 in Suttung's halls.

106. Gunnlöð gave me,  
on her golden seat,  
a draught of the precious mead;  
a bad recompense  
I afterwards made her,  
for her whole soul,  
her fervent love.

107. Rati's mouth I caused  
to make a space,  
and to gnaw the rock;  
over and under me  
were the Jötun's ways:  
thus I my head did peril.

108. Of a well-assumed form  
I made good use:  
few things fail the wise;  
for Odhrærir  
is now come up  
to men's earthly dwellings.

109. 'Tis to me doubtful  
that I could have come  
from the Jötun's courts,  
had not Gunnlöð aided me,  
that good damsel,  
over whom I laid my arm.

110. On the day following  
came the Hrim-thursar,  
to learn something of the High One,  
in the High One's hall:  
after Bölverk they inquired,  
whether he with the gods were come,  
or Suttung had destroyed him?

111. Odin, I believe,  
 a ring-oath gave.<sup>9</sup>  
 Who in his faith will trust?  
 Suttung defrauded,  
 of his drink bereft,  
 and Gunnlöd made to weep!  
 \*\*\*\*\*

112. Time 'tis to discourse  
 from the preacher's chair. -  
 By the well of Urd  
 I silent sat,  
 I saw and meditated,  
 I listened to men's words.

113. Of runes I heard discourse,  
 and of things divine,  
 nor of graving them were they silent,  
 nor of sage counsels,  
 at the High One's hall.  
 In the High One's hall.  
 I thus heard say:

114. I counsel thee, Loddfafnir,  
 to take advice:  
 thou wilt profit if thou takest it.  
 Rise not at night,  
 unless to explore,  
 or art compelled to go out.

115. I counsel thee, Loddfafnir,  
 to take advice,  
 thou wilt profit if thou takest it.  
 In an enchantress's embrace  
 thou mayest not sleep,  
 so that in her arms she clasp thee.

9. In the pagan North oaths were taken on a holy ring or bracelet, as with us on the Gospels, a sacred ring being kept in the temple for the purpose.

116. She will be the cause  
that thou carest not  
for Thing or prince's words;  
food thou wilt shun  
and human joys;  
sorrowful wilt thou go to sleep.

117. I counsel thee, etc.  
Another's wife  
entice thou never  
to secret converse.

118. I counsel thee, etc.  
By fell or firth  
if thou have to travel,  
provide thee well with food.

119. I counsel thee, etc.  
A bad man  
let thou never  
know thy misfortunes;  
for from a bad man  
thou never wilt obtain  
a return for thy good will.

120. I saw mortally  
wound a man  
a wicked woman's words;  
a false tongue  
caused his death,  
and most unrighteously.

121. I counsel thee, etc.  
If thou knowest thou has a friend,  
whom thou well canst trust,  
go oft to visit him;  
for with brushwood overgrown,  
and with high grass,  
is the way that no one treads.

122. I counsel thee, etc.  
A good man attract to thee  
in pleasant converse;  
and salutary speech learn while thou livest.

123. I counsel thee, etc.  
With thy friend  
be thou never  
first to quarrel.  
Care gnaws the heart,  
if thou to no one canst  
thy whole mind disclose.

124. I counsel thee, etc.  
Words thou never  
shouldst exchange  
with a witless fool;

125. For from an ill-conditioned man  
thou wilt never get  
a return for good;  
but a good man will  
bring thee favour  
by his praise.

126. There is a mingling of affection,  
where one can tell  
another all his mind.  
Everything is better  
than being with the deceitful.  
He is not another's friend  
who ever says as he says.

127. I counsel thee, etc.  
Even in three words  
quarrel not with a worse man:  
often the better yields,  
when the worse strikes.

128. I counsel thee, etc.  
Be not a shoemaker,  
nor a shaftmaker,  
unless for thyself it be;  
for a shoe if ill made,  
or a shaft if crooked,  
will call down evil on thee.

129. I counsel thee, etc.  
Wherever of injury thou knowest,  
regard that injury as thy own;  
and give to thy foes no peace.

130. I counsel thee, etc.  
Rejoiced at evil  
be thou never;  
but let good give thee pleasure.

131. I counsel thee, etc.  
In a battle  
look not up,  
(like swine  
the sons of men become)  
that men may not fascinate thee.

132. If thou wilt induce a good woman  
to pleasant converse,  
thou must promise fair,  
and hold to it;  
no one turns from good if it can be got.

133. I enjoin thee to be wary,  
but not over wary;  
at drinking be thou most wary,  
and with another's wife;  
and thirdly,  
that thieves delude thee not.



134. With insult or derision  
treat thou never  
a guest or wayfarer,  
they often little know,  
who sit within,  
or what race they are who come.

135. Vices and virtues  
the sons of mortals bear  
in their breasts mingled;  
no one is so good  
that no failing attends him,  
nor so bad as to be good for nothing.

136. At a hoary speaker  
laugh thou never;  
often is good that which the aged utter,  
oft from a shriveled hide  
discreet words issue;  
from those whose skin is pendent  
and decked with scars,  
and who go tottering among the vile.

137. I counsel thee, etc.  
Rail not at a guest,  
nor from thy gate thrust him;  
treat well the indigent;  
they will speak well of thee.

138. Strong is the bar  
that must be raised  
to admit all.  
Do thou give a penny,  
or they will call down on thee  
every ill in thy limbs.

139. I counsel thee, etc.  
 Wherever thou beer drinkest,  
 invoke to thee the power of earth;  
 for earth is good against drink,  
 fire for distempers,  
 the oak for constipation,  
 a corn-ear for sorcery  
 a hall for domestic strife.  
 In bitter hates invoke the moon;  
 the biter for bite-injuries is good;  
 but runes against calamity;  
 fluid let earth absorb.

**Runatalþáttir Óðins: Odin's Rune-song.<sup>10</sup>**

140. I know that I hung,  
 on a wind-rocked tree,  
 nine whole nights,  
 with a spear wounded,  
 and to Odin offered,  
 myself to myself;  
 on that tree,  
 of which no one knows  
 from what root it springs.

141. Bread no one gave me,  
 nor a horn of drink,  
 downward I peered,  
 to runes applied myself,  
 wailing learnt them,  
 then fell down thence.

142. Potent songs nine  
 from the famed son I learned  
 of Bölthorn, Bestla's sire,  
 and a draught obtained

10. The first eight strophes of this composition require an explanation which I am incompetent to afford. They have had many interpreters and as many interpretations. The idea of Odin hanging on a tree would seem to have been suggested by what we read of the grove at Upsala, or Sigtuna, in which the victims offered to that deity were suspended from the trees. In the guise of an unknown wanderer, Odin may be supposed to have been captured and thus offered to himself. It no doubt refers to some lost legend.

of the precious mead,  
drawn from Odhrærir.

143. Then I began to bear fruit,  
and to know many things,  
to grow and well thrive:  
word by word  
I sought out words,  
fact by fact  
I sought out facts.

144. Runes thou wilt find,  
and explained characters,  
very large characters,  
very potent characters,  
which the great speaker depicted,  
and the high powers formed,  
and the powers' prince graved:

145. Odin among the Æsir,  
but among the Alfar, Dáin,  
and Dvalin for the dwarfs,  
Ásvið for the Jötuns:  
some I myself graved.

146. Knowest thou how to grave them?  
knowest thou how to expound them?  
knowest thou how to depict them?  
knowest thou how to prove them?  
knowest thou how to pray?  
knowest thou how to offer?  
knowest thou how to send?<sup>11</sup>  
knowest thou how to consume?

147. 'Tis better not to pray  
than too much offer;  
a gift ever looks to a return.  
'Tis better not to send  
than too much consume.  
So Thund graved

11. Probably, send them (the runes) forth on their several missions.

before the origin of men,  
 where he ascended,  
 to whence he afterwards came.

148. Those songs I know  
 which the king's wife knows not  
 nor son of man.  
 Help the first is called,  
 for that will help thee  
 against strifes and cares.

149. For the second I know,  
 what the sons of men require,  
 who will as leeches live.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

150. For the third I know,<sup>12</sup>  
 if I have great need  
 to restrain my foes,  
 the weapons' edge I deaden:  
 of my adversaries  
 nor arms nor wiles harm aught.

151. For the forth I know,  
 if men place  
 bonds on my limbs,  
 I so sing  
 that I can walk;  
 the fetter starts from my feet,  
 and the manacle from my hands.

152. For the fifth I know,  
 I see a shot from a hostile hand,  
 a shaft flying amid the host,  
 so swift it cannot fly  
 that I cannot arrest it,  
 if only I get sight of it.

12. The miraculous powers here ascribed to Odin to himself bear, in many instances, a remarkable similarity to those attributed to him by Snorri.

153. For the sixth I know,  
 if one wounds me  
 with a green tree's roots;<sup>13</sup>  
 also if a man  
 declares hatred to me,  
 harm shall consume them sooner than me.

154. For the seventh I know,  
 if a lofty house I see  
 blaze o'er its inmates,  
 so furiously it shall not burn  
 that I cannot save it.  
 That song I can sing.

155. For the eighth I know,  
 what to all is  
 useful to learn:  
 where hatred grows  
 among the sons of men  
 that I can quickly assuage.

156. For the ninth I know,  
 if I stand in need  
 my bark on the water to save,  
 I can the wind  
 on the waves allay,  
 and the sea lull.

157. For the tenth I know,  
 if I see troll-wives  
 sporting in air,  
 I can so operate  
 that they will forsake  
 their own forms,  
 and their own minds.

158. For the eleventh I know,  
 if I have to lead  
 my ancient friends to battle,

13. The ancient inhabitants of the North believed that the roots of trees were particularly fitted for hurtful *troll-*  
*dom*, or witchcraft, and that wounds caused thereby were mortal. In India a similar superstition prevails of the hurt-  
 fulness of the roots of trees.

under their shields I sing,  
 and with power they go  
 safe to the fight,  
 safe from the fight;  
 safe on every side they go.

159. For the twelfth I know,  
 if on a tree I see  
 a corpse swinging from a halter,  
 I can so grave  
 and in runes depict,  
 that the man shall walk,  
 and with me converse.

160. For the thirteenth I know,  
 if on a young man  
 I sprinkle water,  
 he shall not fall,  
 though he into battle come:  
 that man shall not sink before swords.

161. For the fourteenth I know,  
 if in the society of men  
 I have to enumerate the gods,  
 Æsir and Alfar,  
 I know the distinctions of all.  
 This few unskilled can do.

162. For the fifteenth I know  
 what the dwarf Thiodreyrir sang  
 before Delling's doors.  
 Strength he sang to the Æsir,  
 and to the Alfar prosperity,  
 wisdom to Hroptatýr.

163. For the sixteenth I know,  
 if a modest maiden's favour and affection  
 I desire to possess,  
 the soul I change  
 of the white-armed damsel,  
 and wholly turn her mind.

164. For the seventeenth I know,  
that that young maiden will  
reluctantly avoid me.  
These songs, Loddafnir!  
thou wilt long have lacked;  
yet it may be good if thou understandest them,  
profitable if thou learnest them.

165. For the eighteenth I know  
that which I never teach  
to maid or wife of man,  
(all is better  
what one only knows.  
This is the closing of the songs)  
save her alone  
who clasps me in her arms,  
or is my sister.

166. Now are sung the  
High-one's songs,  
in the High-one's hall,  
to the sons of men all-useful,  
but useless to the Jötun's sons.  
Hail to him who has sung them!

Hail to him who knows them!  
May he profit who has learnt them!  
Hail to those who have listened to them!





## Hymiskviða: The Lay of Hymir

1. Once the celestial gods  
had been taking fish,  
and were in comotation,  
ere they the truth discovered.<sup>1</sup>  
Rods<sup>2</sup> they shook,  
and blood inspected,  
when they found at Ægir's  
a lack of kettles.

2. Sat the rock-dweller  
glad as a child,  
much like the son  
of Miskorblindi.  
In his eyes looked  
Ygg's son steadfastly.  
"Thou to the Æsir shalt  
oft a comotation give."

3. Caused trouble to the Jötun  
th' unwelcome-worded Ás:  
he forthwith meditated  
vengeance on the gods.  
Sif's husband he besought  
a kettle him to bring.  
"in which I beer  
for all of you may brew."

4. The illustrious gods  
found that impossible,  
nor could the exalted powers  
it accomplish,  
till from true-heartedness,  
Tý to Hlorridi  
much friendly counsel gave.

1. To wit, that they were short of kettles for brewing.

2. That is divining rods.

5. "There dwell eastward  
of Elivagar  
the all-wise Hýmí, r,  
at heaven's end.  
My sire, fierce of mood,  
a kettle owns,  
a capacious caldron,  
a rast in depth."

Thor

6. "Knowest thou whether we  
can get the liquor-boiler?"

Tý

"Yes, friend! if we  
stratagem employ."  
Rapidly they drove  
forward that day  
from Asgard,  
till to the giant's home they came.

7. Thor stalled his goats,  
splendid of horn,  
then turned him to the hall  
that Hýmí, r owned.  
The son his granddam found  
to him most loathful;  
heads she had  
nine hundred.

8. But another came  
all-golden forth,  
fair-browed, bearing  
the beer-cup to her son:

9. "Ye Jötuns' kindred!  
I will you both,  
ye daring pair,  
under the kettles place.  
My husband is  
oftentimes  
niggard toward guests,  
to ill-humour prone."

10. But the monster,  
the fierce-souled Hýmírl,  
late returned  
home from the chase.  
He the hall entered,  
the icebergs resounded,  
as the churl approached;  
the thicket on his cheeks was frozen.

11. "Hail to thee, Hýmírl!  
be of good cheer:  
now thy son is come  
to thy hall,  
whom we expected  
from his long journey;  
him accompanies  
our famed adversary,  
the friend of man,  
who Veor hight.

12. "See where they sit  
under the hall's gable,  
as if to shun thee:  
the pillar stands before them."  
In shivers flew the pillar  
at the Jötun's glance;  
the beam was first  
broken in two.

13. Eight kettles fell,  
but only one of them,  
a hard-hammered cauldron,  
whole from the column.  
The two came forth,  
but the old Jötun  
with eyes surveyed  
his adversary.

14. Augured to him  
his mind no good,  
when he saw  
the giantess's sorrow  
on the floor coming.  
Then were three  
oxen taken,  
and the Jötun bade  
them forthwith be boiled.

15. Each one they made  
by the head shorter,  
and to the fire  
afterwards bore them.  
Sif's consort ate,  
ere to sleep he went,  
completely, he alone,  
two of Hýmír's beeves.

16. Seemed to the hoary  
friend of Hrúngnir  
Hlorridi's refecton  
full well large:  
"We three to-morrow night  
shall be compelled  
on what we catch  
to live."

17. Veor said he would  
on the sea row,  
if the bold Jötun him  
would with baits supply:  
"To the herd betake thee,  
(if thou in thy courage trustest,  
crusher of the rock-dwellers!)  
for baits to seek.

18. I expect  
that thou wilt  
bait from an ox  
easily obtain.”  
The guest in haste  
to the forest went,  
where stood an all-black  
ox before him.

19. The Thursar’s bane  
wrung from an ox  
the high fastness  
of his two horns.  
“To me thy work seems  
worse by far,  
ruler of keels!  
than if thou hadst sat quiet.”

20. The lord of goats  
the apes’ kinsman besought  
the horse of plank  
farther out to move;  
but the Jötun  
declared his slight desire  
farther to row.

21. The mighty Hýmíř drew,  
he alone,  
two whales up  
with his hook;  
but at the stern abaft  
Veor cunningly  
made him a line.

22. Fixed on the hook  
the shield of men,  
the serpent’s slayer,  
the ox’s head.

Gaped at the bait  
 the foe of gods,  
 the encircler beneath  
 of every land.<sup>3</sup>

23. Drew up boldly  
 the mighty Thor  
 the worm with venom glistening,  
 up to the side;  
 with his hammer struck,  
 on his foul head's summit,  
 like a rock towering,  
 the wolf's own brother.

24. The icebergs resounded,  
 the caverns howled,  
 the old earth  
 shrank together:  
 at length the fish  
 back into the ocean sank.<sup>4</sup>

25. The Jötun was little glad,  
 as they rowed back,  
 so that the powerful Hýmírr  
 nothing spake,  
 but the oar moved  
 in another course.

26. "Wilt thou do  
 half the work with me,  
 either the whales  
 home to the dwelling bear,  
 or the boat  
 fast bind?"

3. The great serpent that encircles the earth.

4. According to the *Prose Edda*, the giant, overcome with fright, took out his knife and severed Thor's line.

27. Hlorridi went,  
grasped the prow,  
quickly, with its hold-water, lifted  
the water-steed,  
together with its oars  
and scoop;  
bore to the dwelling  
the Jötun's ocean-swine,  
the curved vessel,  
through the wooded hills.

28. But the Jötun  
yet ever frowned,  
to strife accustomed,  
with Thor disputed,  
said that no one was strong,  
however vigorously  
he might row,  
unless he his cup could break.

29. But Hlorridi,  
when to his hands it came,  
forthwith brake  
an upright stone in twain;  
sitting dashed the cup  
through the pillars:  
yet they brought it whole  
to Hýmímir back.

30. Until the beautiful  
woman gave  
important, friendly counsel,  
which she only knew:  
"Strike at the head of Hýmímir,  
the Jötun with food oppressed,  
that is harder  
than any cup."

31. Rose then on his knee  
the stern lord of goats,  
clad in all  
his godlike power.  
Unhurt remained  
the old man's helm-block,  
but the round wine-bearer  
was in shivers broken.

32. "Much good, I know,  
has departed from me,  
now that my cup I see  
hurled from my knees."  
Thus the old man spake:  
I can never  
say again,  
beer thou art too hot.

33. Now 'tis to be tried  
if ye can carry  
the beer-vessel  
out of our dwelling."  
Tý twice assayed  
to move the vessel,  
yet at each time  
stood the kettle fast.

34. Then Modi's father  
by the brim grasped it,  
and trod through  
the dwelling's floor.  
Sif's consort lifted  
the kettle on his head,  
while about his heels  
its rings jingled.

35. They had far journeyed  
before Odin's son  
cast one look backward:  
he from the caverns saw,  
with Hýmímir from the east,  
a troop of many-headed  
monsters coming.



36. From his shoulders he  
 lifted the kettle down;  
 Mjölnir hurled forth  
 towards the savage crew,  
 and slew  
 all the mountain-giants,  
 who with Hýmíř  
 had him pursued.

37. Long they had not journeyed  
 when of Hlorridi's goats  
 one lay down  
 half-dead before the car.  
 It from the pole had sprung  
 across the trace;  
 but the false Loki  
 was of this the cause.

38. Now ye have heard,  
 for what fabulist can  
 more fully tell  
 what indemnity  
 he from the giant got:  
 he paid for it  
 with his children both.<sup>5</sup>

39. In his strength exulting  
 he to the gods' counsel came,  
 and had the kettle,  
 which Hýmíř had possessed,  
 out of which every god  
 shall beer with Ægir drink  
 at every harvest-tide.

5. This strophe belongs apparently to another poem.



# Thrymskviða eður Hamarsheimt

## The Lay of Thrym, or the Hammer recovered

1. Wroth was Vingthor,  
when he awoke,  
and his hammer  
missed;  
his beard he shook,  
his forehead struck,  
the son of earth  
felt all around him;

2. and first of all  
these words he uttered:  
“Hear now, Loki!  
what I now say,  
which no ones knows  
anywhere on earth,  
nor in heaven above;  
the Ás’s hammer is stolen!”

3. They went to the fair  
Freyja’s dwelling,  
and he these words  
first of all said:  
“Wilt thou me, Freyja,  
thy feather-garment lend,  
that perchance my hammer  
I may find?”

Freyja  
4. “That I would give thee,  
although of gold it were,  
and trust it to thee,  
though it were of silver.”

5. Flew then Loki  
the plumage rattled  
until he came beyond  
the Æsir's dwellings,  
and came within  
the Jötun's land.

6. On a mound sat Thrym,  
the Thursar's lord,  
for his greyhounds  
plaiting gold bands  
and his horses'  
manes smoothing.

7. "How goes it with the Æsir  
How goes it with the Alfar,  
Why art thou come alone  
to Jötunheim?"

Loki  
8. "Ill it goes with the Æsir,  
Ill it goes with the Alfar.  
Hast thou Hlorridi's  
hammer hidden?"

Thrym  
9. "I have Hlorridi's  
hammer hidden  
eight rasts  
beneath the earth;  
it shall no man  
get again,  
unless he bring me  
Freyja to wife."

10. Flew then Loki  
 the plumage rattled  
 until he came beyond  
 the Jötun's dwellings,  
 and came within  
 the Æsir's courts;  
 there he met Thor,  
 in the middle court,  
 who these words  
 first of all uttered.

11. "Hast thou had success  
 as well as labour?  
 Tell me from the air  
 the long tidings.  
 Oft of him who sits  
 are the tales defective,  
 and he who lied down  
 utters falsehood."

Loki  
 12. "I have had labour  
 and success:  
 Thrym has thy hammer,  
 the Thursar's lord.  
 It shall no man  
 get again,  
 unless he bring him  
 Freyja to wife."

13. They went the fair  
 Freyja to find;  
 and he those words  
 first of all said:  
 "Bind thee, Freyja,  
 in bridal raiment,  
 we two must drive  
 to Jötunheim."

13. Wroth then was Freyja,  
and with anger chafed,  
all the Æsir's hall  
beneath her trembled:  
in shivers flew the famed  
Brisinga necklace.  
“Know me to be  
of women lewdest,  
if with thee I drive  
to Jötunheim.”

15. Straightway went the Æsir  
all to counsel,  
and the Asyniur  
all to hold converse;  
and deliberated  
the mighty gods,  
how they Hlorridi's  
hammer might get back.

16. Then said Heimdall,  
of Æsir brightest  
he well foresaw,  
like other Vanir  
“Let us clothe Thor  
with bridal raiment,  
let him have the famed  
Brisinga necklace.

17. “Let by his side  
keys jingle,  
and woman's weeds  
fall round his knees,  
but on his breast  
place precious stones,  
and a neat coif  
set on his head.”

18. Then said Thor,  
the mighty Ás:  
“Me the Æsir will  
call womanish,  
if I let myself be clad  
in bridal raiment.”

19. Then spake Loki,  
Laufey’s son:  
“Do thou, Thor! refrain  
from suchlike words:  
forthwith the Jötuns will  
Asgard inhabit,  
unless thy hammer thou  
gettest back.”

20. Then they clad Thor  
in bridal raiment,  
and with the noble  
Brisinga necklace,  
let by his side  
keys jingle,  
and woman’s weeds  
fall round his knees:  
and on his breast  
places precious stones,  
and a neat coif  
sat on his head.

21. Then said Loki,  
Laufey’s son:  
“I will with thee  
as a servant go:  
we two will drive  
to Jötunheim.”

22. Straightway were the goats  
homeward driven,  
hurried to the traces;  
they had fast to run.  
The rocks were shivered,  
the earth was in a blaze;  
Odin's son drove  
to Jötunheim.

23. Then said Thrym,  
the Thursar's lord:  
"Rise up, Jötuns!  
and the benches deck,  
now they bring me  
Freyja to wife,  
Niörd's daughter,  
from Noatún.

24. "Hither to our court let bring  
gold-horned cows,  
all-black oxen,  
for the Jötuns' joy.  
Treasures I have many,  
necklaces many,  
Freyja alone  
seemed to me wanting."

25. In the evening  
they early came,  
and for the Jötuns  
beer was brought forth.  
Thor alone an ox devoured,  
salmons eight,  
and all the sweetmeats  
women should have.  
Sif's consort drank  
three salsds of mead.



26. Then said Thrym,  
the Thursar's prince:  
"Where hast thou seen brides  
eat more voraciously?  
I never saw brides  
feed more amply,  
nor a maiden  
drink more mead."

27. Sat the all-crafty  
serving-maid close by,  
who words fitting found  
against the Jötun's speech:  
"Freyja has nothing eaten  
for eight nights,  
so eager was she  
for Jötunheim."

28. Under her veil he stooped  
desirous to salute her,  
but sprang back  
along the hall.  
"Why are so piercing  
Freyja's looks?  
Methinks that fire  
burns from her eyes."

29. Sat the all-crafty  
serving-maid close by,  
who words fitting found  
against the Jötun's speech:  
"Freyja for eight nights  
has not slept,  
so eager was she  
for Jötunheim."

30. In came the Jötun's  
luckless sister,  
for a bride-gift  
she dared to ask:  
"Give me from thy hands  
the ruddy rings,  
if thou wouldst gain  
my love,  
my love  
and favour all."

31. Then said Thrym,  
the Thursar's lord:  
"Bring the hammer in,  
the bride to consecrate;  
lay Mjöllnir  
on the maiden's knee;  
unite us each with other  
by the hand of Vör.

32. Laughed Hlorridi's  
soul in his breast,  
when the fierce-hearted  
his hammer recognized.  
He first slew Thrym,  
the Thursar's lord,  
and the Jötun's race  
all crushed;

33. He slew the Jötun's  
aged sister,  
her who a bride-gift  
had demanded;  
she a blow got  
instead of skillings,  
a hammer's stroke  
for many rings.  
So got Odin's son  
his hammer back.

## Alvíssmál: The Lay of the Dwarf Alvis

Alvis

1. The benches they are decking,  
now shall the bride<sup>1</sup> with me  
bend her way home.  
That beyond my strength I have hurried  
will to every one appear:  
at home naught shall disturb my quiet.

Vingthor

2. What man is this?  
Why about the nose art thou so pale?  
Hast thou last night with corpses lain?  
To me thou seemst to bear  
resemblances to the Thursar.  
Thou art not born to carry off a bride.

Alvis

3. Alvis I am named,  
beneath the earth I dwell,  
under the rock I own a place.  
The lord of chariots  
I am come to visit.  
A promise once confirmed let no one break.<sup>2</sup>

Vingthor

4. I will break it;  
for o'er the maid I have,  
as father, greatest power.  
I was from home  
when the promise was given thee.  
Among the gods I the sole giver am.

Alvis

5. What man is this,  
lays claim to power  
over that fair, bright maiden?  
For far-reaching shafts

1. Thrud, Thor's daughter by his wife Sif. *Skaldskap*.

2. This appears to allude to a promise made to the dwarf; but of which the story is lost.

few will know thee.  
Who has decked thee with bracelets?

Vingthor  
6. Vingthor I am named,  
wide I have wandered;  
I am Sidgrani's son:  
with my dissent thou shalt not  
that young maiden have,  
nor that union obtain.

Alvis  
7. Thy consent  
I fain would obtain.  
Rather would I possess  
than be without  
that snow-white maiden.

Vingthor  
8. The maiden's love  
shall not, wise guest!  
be unto thee denied,  
if thou of every world  
canst tell  
all I desire to know.

Alvis  
9. Vingthor! thou canst try,  
as thou art desirous  
the knowledge of the dwarf to prove.  
All the nine worlds  
I have travelled over,  
and every being known.

Vingthor  
10. Tell me, Alvis!  
for all men's concerns  
I presume thee, dwarf, to know  
how the earth is called,  
which lies before the sons of men,  
in every world.

Alvis

11. Jörd among men 'tis called,  
but with the Æsir fold;  
the Vanir call it vega,  
the Jötuns igroen,  
the Alfar groandi,  
the powers supreme aur.

Vingthor

12. Tell me Alvis! etc.  
how the heaven is called,  
which is perceptible,  
in every world.

Alvis

13. Himinn tis called by men;  
but hlýrnir with the gods;  
vindofni the Vanir call it,  
uppheimr the Jötuns,  
the Alfar fagaræfr,  
the dwarfs driupansal.

Vingthor

14. Tell me Alvis! etc.  
how the moon is called,  
which men see  
in every world.

Alvis

15. Mani 'tis called by men,  
but mylinn with the gods,  
hverfanda hvel in Hel they call it,  
skyndi the Jötuns,  
but the dwarfs skin;  
the Alfar name it artali.

Vingthor

16. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the sun is called,  
which men's sons see  
in every world.

Alvis

17. Sol among men 'tis called,  
but with the gods sunna,  
the dwarfs call it Dvalinn's leika,  
the Jötuns eyglo,  
the Alfar fagrahvel,  
the Æsir's sons alskir.

Vingthor

18. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the clouds are called,  
which with showers are mingled  
in every world.

Alvis

19. Sky they are called by men,  
but skurvan by the gods;  
the Vanir call them vindflot,  
the Jötuns urvan,  
the Alfar veðrmegin;  
in Hel they are called hialm huliðs.

Vingthor

20. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the wind is called,  
which widely passes  
over every world.

Alvis

21. Windr 'tis called by men,  
but vavuðr by the gods,  
the wide-ruling powers call it gneggiuð,  
the Jötuns æpir  
the Alfar dynfari,  
in Hel they call it hviðuðr.

Vingthor

22. Tell me Alvis! etc.  
how the calm is called,  
which has to rest  
in every world.

Alvis

23. Logn 'tis called by men,  
but lægi by the gods,  
the Vanir call it vindslot,  
the Jötuns ofhlý,  
the Alfar dagsevi,  
the Dwarfs call it dags vera.

Vingthor

24. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
what the sea is called,  
which men row over  
in every world.

Alvis

25. Sær 'tis called by men,  
but silægja with the gods;  
the Vanir call it vagr,  
the Jötuns alheimr,  
the Alfar lagastafr,  
the Dwarfs call it diupan mar.

Vingthor

26. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the fire is called,  
which burns before men's sons  
in every world.

Alvis

27. Eldr 'tis called by men,  
but by the Æsir funi;  
the Vanir call it vagr,  
the Jötuns frekr,  
but the Dwarfs forbrennir;  
in Hel they call it hröðuðr.

Vingthor

28. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the forest it called,  
which grows for the sons of men  
in every world.

Alvis

29. Viðr 'tis called by men,  
but vallarfax by gods,  
Hel's inmates call it hliðþangr,  
the Jötuns eldi,  
the Alfar fagrlimi;  
the Vanir call it vöndr.

Vingthor

30. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the night is called,  
that Nörvi's daughter hight,  
in every world.

Alvis

31. Nott it is called by men,  
but by the gods niol;  
the wide-ruling powers call it grima,  
the Jötuns olios,  
the Alfar svefngaman;  
the Dwarfs call it draumniörunn.

Vingthor

32. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the seed is called,  
which the sons of men sow  
in every world.

Alvis

33. Bygg it is called by men,  
but by the gods barr,  
the Vanir call it vaxtr,  
the Jötuns æti,  
the Alfar lagastafr;  
in Hel 'tis hnipinn called.

Vingthor

34. Tell me, Alvis! etc.  
how the beer is called,  
which the sons of men drink  
in every world.



Alvis

35. Öl it is called by men,  
but by the Æsir biorr,  
the Vanir call it veig,  
hreinna lögr the Jötuns,  
but in Hel 'tis called miöðr:  
Suttung's sons call it sumbl.

Vingthor

36. In one breast  
I have never found  
more ancient lore. -  
By great wiles thou hast, I tell thee,  
been deluded.  
Thou art above ground, dwarf! at dawn;  
already in the hall the sun is shining!



## Harbarðslióð: The Lay of Harbard

Thor journeying from the eastern parts came to a strait or sound, on the other side of which was a ferryman with his boat. Thor cried out: -

1. Who is the knave of knaves,  
that by the sound stands yonder?

Harbard

2. Who is the churl of churls,  
that cries across the water?

Thor

3. Ferry me across the sound,  
to-morrow I'll regale thee.  
I have a basket on my back:  
there is no better food:  
at my ease I ate,  
before I quitted home,  
herrings and oats,  
with which I yet feel sated.

Harbard

4. Thou art in haste  
to praise thy meal:  
thou surely hast no foreknowledge;  
for sad will be thy home:  
thy mother, I believe, is dead.

Thor

5. Thou sayest now  
what seems to every one  
most unwelcome to know  
that my mother is dead.

Harbard

6. Thou dost not look like one  
who owns three country dwellings,  
bare-legged thou standest,  
and like a beggar clothed;  
thou hast not even breeches.

Thor

7. Steer hitherward thy boat;  
I will direct thee where to land.  
But who owns this skiff,  
which by the strand thou holdest?

Harbard

8. Hildolf he is named  
who bade me hold it,  
a man in council wise,  
who dwells in Radsö sound.  
Robbers he bade me not to ferry,  
or horse-stealers,  
but good men only,  
and those whom I well knew.  
Tell me then they name,  
if thou wilt cross the sound.

Thor

9. I my name will tell,  
(although I am an outlaw)  
and all my kin:  
I am Odin's son,  
Meili's brother,  
and Magni's sire,  
the gods' mighty leader:  
With Thor thou here mayst speak.  
I will now ask  
how thou art called.

10. I am Harbard called;  
seldom I my name conceal.

Thor

11. Why shouldst thou thy name conceal,  
unless thou crime has perpetrated?

Harbard

12. Yet, thou I may crime have perpetrated,  
I will nathless guard my life  
against such as thou art;  
unless I death-doomed am.

Thor

13. It seems to me a foul annoyance  
to wade across the strait to thee,  
and wet my garments:  
but I will pay thee, mannikin!  
for thy sharp speeches,  
if o'er the sound I come.

Harbard

14. Here will I stand,  
and here await thee.  
Thou wilt have found no stouter one  
since Hrugnir's death.

Thor

15. Thou now remindest me  
how I with Hrugnir fought,  
that stout-hearted Jötun,  
whose head was all of stone;  
yet I made him fall,  
and sink before me.  
What meanwhile didst thou, Harbard?

Harbard

16. I was with Fjölvari  
five winters through,  
in the isle  
which Algrön hight.  
There we could fight,  
and slaughter make,  
many perils prove,  
indulge in love.

Thor

17. How did your women  
prove towards you?

Harbard

18. Sprightly women we had,  
 had they but been meek;  
 shrewd ones we had,  
 had they but been kind.  
 Of sand a rope  
 they twisted,  
 and from the deep valley  
 dug the earth:  
 to them all I alone was  
 superior in cunning.  
 I rested with the sisters seven,  
 and their love and pleasures shared.  
 What meanwhile didst thou, Thor?

Thor

19. I slew Thiassi,  
 that stout-hearted Jötun:  
 up I cast the eyes  
 of Allvaldi's son  
 into the heaven serene:  
 they are signs the greatest  
 of my deeds.  
 What meanwhile didst thou, Harbard?

Harbard

20. Great seductive arts I used  
 against the riders of the night,<sup>1</sup>  
 when from their husbands I enticed them.  
 A mighty Jötun I believed  
 Hlebard to be:  
 a magic wand he gave me,  
 but from his wits I charmed him.

Thor

21. With evil mind then  
 thou didst good gifts requite.

1. Giantesses, witches, etc.

Harbard

22. One tree gets that  
which is from another scraped:  
each one in such case is for self.  
What meanwhile didst thou, Thor?

Thor

23. In the east I was,  
and slew the Jötun brides,  
crafty in evil,  
as they to the mountain went.  
Great would have been the Jötun race,  
had they all lived;  
and not a man  
left in Midgard.  
What meanwhile didst thou, Harbard?

Harbard

24. I was in Valland,  
and followed warfare;  
princes I excited,  
but never reconciled.  
Odin has all the jarls  
that in conflict fall;  
but Thor the race of thralls.

Thor

25. Unequally thou wouldst divide  
the folk among the Æsir,  
if thou but hadst the power.

Harbard

26. Thor has strength overmuch,  
but courage none;  
from cowardice and fear,  
thou wast crammed into a glove,  
and hardly thoughtest thou was Thor.  
Thou durst not then,  
through thy terror,  
either sneeze or cough,  
lest Fjalar it might hear.

Thor

27. Harbard, thou wretch!  
I would strike thee dead,  
could I but stretch my arm across the sound.

Harbard

28. Why wouldst thou  
stretch thy arm across the sound,  
when there is altogether no offence?  
But what didst thou, Thor?

Thor

29. In the east I was,  
and a river I defended,  
when the sons of Svarang  
me assailed,  
and with stones pelted me,  
though in their success they little joyed:  
they were the first  
to sue for peace.  
What meanwhile didst thou, Harbard?

Harbard

30. I was in the east,  
and with a certain lass held converse;  
with that fair I dallied,  
and long meetings had.  
I that gold-bright one delighted;  
the game amused her.

Thor

31. Then you had kind damsels there?

Harbard

32. Of thy aid I had need, Thor!  
in retaining  
that maiden lily-fair.

Thor

33. I would have given it thee,  
if I had had the opportunity.



Harbard

34. I would have trusted thee,  
my confidence  
if thou hadst not betrayed it.

Thor

35. I am not such a heel-chafer  
as an old leather shoe in spring.

Harbard

36. What meanwhile didst thou, Thor?

Thor

37. The Berserkers' brides  
I on Læssö cudgeled;  
they the worst had perpetrated,  
the whole people had seduced.

Harbard

38. Dastardly didst thou act, Thor!  
when thou didst cudgel women.

Thor

39. She-wolves they were,  
and scarcely women.  
They crushed my ship,  
which with props I had secured,  
with iron clubs threatened me,  
and drove away Thialfi.  
What meanwhile didst thou, Harbard?

Harbard

40. I in the army was,  
which was hither sent,  
war-banners to raise,  
lances to redden.

Thor

41. Of that thou now wilt speak,  
as thou wentest forth  
us hard terms to offer.

Harbard

42. That shall be indemnified  
by a hand-ring,  
such as arbitrators give,  
who wish to reconcile us.

Thor

43. Where didst thou learn words  
than which I never heard  
more irritating?

Harbard

44. From men I learned them,  
from ancient men,  
whose home is in the woods.

Thor

45. Thou givest certainly  
a good name to grave-mounds,  
when thou callest them  
homes in the woods.

Harbard

46. So speak I  
of such a subject.

Thor

47. Thy shrewd words  
will bring thee evil,  
if I resolve the sound to ford.  
Louder than a wolf  
thou wilt howl, I trow,  
if of my hammer thou gettest a touch.

Harbard

48. Sif has a gallant at home;  
thou wilt anxious be to find him:  
thou shalt that arduous work perform;  
it will beseem thee better.

Thor

49. Thou utterest what comes upmost,  
so that to me it be most annoying,  
thou dastardly varlet!  
I believe thou art lying.

Harbard

50. I believe I am telling truth.  
Thou art travelling slowly;  
thou wouldst have long since arrived,  
hadst thou assumed another form.

Thor

51. Harbard! thou wretch!  
rather is it thou who has detained me.

Harbard

52. I never thought  
that a ferryman could  
the course of Asa-Thor retard.

Thor

53. One advice I now will give thee:  
row hither with thy boat;  
let us cease from threats;  
approach the sire of Magni.

Harbard

54. Go farther from the sound,  
the passage is refused thee.

Thor

55. Show me then the way,  
if thou wilt not ferry me  
across the water.

Harbard

56. That's too little to refuse.

"Tis far to go;

"tis to the stock an hour,  
and to the stone another;  
then keep the left hand way,  
until thou reachest Verland;  
there will Fjörgyn  
find her son Thor,  
and point out to him  
his kinsmen's ways  
to Odin's land.

Thor

57. Can I get there to-day?

Harbard

58. With pain and toil  
thou mayest get there,  
while the sun is up,  
which, I believe, is now nigh.

Thor

59. Our talk shall now be short,  
as thou answerest with scoffing only.  
For refusing to ferry me I will reward thee,  
if another time we meet.

Harbard

60. Just go to where  
all the powers of evil may have thee.

# För Skirnis eðr Skirnismál

## The Journey or Lay of Skirnir

Frey, son of Niörd, had one day seated himself in Hlidskjalf, and was looking over all regions, when turning his eyes to Jötunheim, he there saw a beautiful girl, as she was passing from her father's dwelling to her bower. Thereupon he became greatly troubled in mind. Frey's attendant was named Skirnir; him Niörd desired to speak with Frey; when Skadi said: -

1. Rise up now, Skirnir!  
go and request  
our son to speak;  
and inquire  
with whom he so sage  
may be offended.

Skirnir  
2. Harsh words I have  
from your son to fear,  
if I go and speak with him,  
and to inquire  
with whom he so sage  
may be offended.

Skirnir  
3. Tell me now, Frey,  
prince of gods!  
for I desire to know,  
why alone thou sittest  
in the spacious hall  
the livelong day?

Frey  
4. Why shall I tell thee,  
thou young man,  
my mind's great trouble?  
for the Alfs' illuminator  
shines every day,  
yet not for my pleasure.

Skirnir

5. Thy care cannot, I think,  
be so great,  
that to me thou canst not tell it;  
for in early days  
we were young together:  
well might we trust each other.

Frey

6. In Gýmir's courts  
I saw walking  
a maid for whom I long.  
Her arms gave forth light  
wherewith shone  
all air and water.

7. Is more desirable  
to me that maid  
than to any youth  
in early days;  
yet will no one,  
Æsir or Alfar,  
that we together live.

Skirnir

8. Give me but thy steed,  
which can bear me through  
the dusk, flickering flame,  
and that sword,  
which brandishes itself  
against the Jötuns' race.

Frey

9. I will give thee my steed,  
which can bear thee through  
the dusk, flickering flame,  
and that sword,  
which will itself brandish,  
if he is bold who raises it.

Skirnir speaks to the horse....

10. Dark it is without,  
 'tis time, I say, for us to go  
 across the misty fells,  
 over the Thursar's land:  
 we shall both return,  
 or the all-potent Jötun  
 will seize us both.

Skirnir rides to Jötunheim, to Gýmir's mansion, where fierce dogs were chained at the gate of the enclosure that was round Gýmir's hall. He rides on to where a cowherd was sitting on a mound, and says to him:

11. Tell me, cowherd!  
 as on the mound thou sittest,  
 and watchest all the ways,  
 how I to the speech may come,  
 of the young maiden,  
 for Gýmir's dogs?

12. Either thou art death-doomed,  
 or thou art a departed one.  
 Speech wilt thou  
 ever lack  
 with the good maid of Gýmir.

Skirnir

13. Better choices than to whine  
 there are for him  
 who is prepared to die:  
 for one day  
 was my age decreed,  
 and my whole life determined.

Gerd

14. What is that sound of sounds,  
 which I now sounding hear  
 within our dwelling?  
 The earth is shaken,  
 and with it all  
 the house of Gýmir trembles.

A serving-maid.

15. A man is here without,  
dismounted from his horse's back:  
he lets his steed browse on the grass.

Gerd

16. Bid him enter  
into our hall,  
and drink of the bright mead;  
although I fear  
it is my brother's slayer  
who waits without.

17. Who is this of the Alfar's,  
or of the Æsir's sons,  
or of the wise Vanir's?  
Why art thou come alone,  
through the hostile fire,  
our halls to visit?

Skirnir

18. I am not of the Alfar's,  
nor of the Æsir's sons,  
nor of the wise Vanir's;  
yet I am come alone,  
through the hostile fire,  
your halls to visit.

19. Apples all-golden  
I have here eleven:  
these I will give thee, Gerd,  
thy love to gain,  
that thou mayest say that Frey  
to thee lives dearest.

Gerd

20. The apples eleven  
I never will accept  
for any mortal's pleasure;  
nor will I and Frey,  
while our lives last,  
live both together.



Skirnir

21. The ring too I will give thee,  
 which was burnt  
 with the young son of Odin.  
 Eight of equal weight  
 will from it drop,  
 every ninth night.

Gerd

22. The ring I will not accept,  
 burnt thou it may have been  
 with the young son of Odin.  
 I have no lack of gold  
 in Gýmir's courts;  
 for my father's wealth I share.

Skirnir

23. Seest thou this sword, young maiden!  
 thin, glittering-bright,  
 which I have here in hand?  
 I thy head will sever  
 from thy neck,  
 if thou speakest not favourably to me.

Gerd

24. Suffer compulsion  
 will I never,  
 to please any man;  
 yet this I foresee,  
 if thou and Gýmir meet,  
 yet will eagerly engage in fight.

Skirnir

25. Seest thou this sword, young maiden!  
 thin, glittering-bright,  
 which I have here in hand?  
 Beneath its edge  
 shall the old Jötun fall:  
 thy sire is death-doomed.

26. With a taming-wand I smite thee,  
and I will tame thee,  
maiden! to my will.  
Thou shalt go thither,  
where the sons of men  
shall never more behold thee.

27. On an eagle's mount  
thou shalt early sit,  
looking and turned towards Hel.  
Food shall to thee more loathsome be  
than is to any one  
the glistening serpent among men.

28. As a prodigy thou shalt be,  
when thou goest forth;  
Hrimnir shall at thee gaze,  
all being at thee stare;  
more wide-known thou shalt become  
than the watch among the gods,<sup>1</sup>  
if thou from thy gratings gape.

29. Solitude and disgust,  
bonds and impatience,  
shall thy tears with grief augment.  
Set thee down,  
and I will tell thee of  
a whelming flood of care,  
and a double grief.

30. Terrors shall bow thee down  
the livelong day,  
in the Jötuns' courts.  
To the Hrimthursar's halls,  
thou shalt each day  
crawl exhausted,  
joyless crawl;  
wail for pastime  
shalt thou have,  
and tears and misery.

1. Heimdall.

31. With a three-headed Thurs  
 thou shalt be ever bound,  
 or be without a mate.  
 Thy mind shall tear thee  
 from morn to morn:  
 as the thistle thou shalt be  
 which has thrust itself  
 on the house-top.
32. To the wold I have been,  
 and to the humid grove,  
 a magic wand to get.  
 A magic wand I got.
33. Wroth with thee is Odin,  
 wroth with thee is the Æsir's prince;  
 Frey shall loathe thee,  
 even ere thou, wicked maid!  
 shalt have felt  
 the gods' dire vengeance.
34. Hear ye, Jötuns!  
 hear ye, Hrimthursar!  
 sons of Suttung!  
 also ye, Æsir's friends!  
 how I forbid  
 how I prohibit  
 man's joy unto the damsel,  
 man's converse to the damsel.
35. Hrimgrinnir the Thurs is named,  
 that shall possess thee,  
 in the grating of the dead beneath;  
 there shall wretched thralls,  
 from the tree's roots,  
 goats' water give thee.  
 Other drink shalt thou,  
 maiden! never get,  
 either for thy pleasure,  
 or for my pleasure.

36. Purs<sup>2</sup> I cut for thee,  
and three letters more:  
ergi, and oenði,  
and oÞola.  
So will I cut them out,  
as I have cut them in,  
if there need shall be.

Gerd  
37. Hail rather to thee, youth!  
and accept an icy cup,  
filled with old mead;  
although I thought not  
that I ever should  
love one of Vanir race.

Skirnir  
38. All my errand  
will I know,  
ere I hence ride home.  
When wilt thou converse hold  
with the powerful  
son of Niörd?

Gerd  
39. Barri the grove is named,  
which we both know,  
the grove of tranquil paths.  
Nine nights hence,  
there to Niörd's son  
Gerd will grant delight.

Skirnir then rode home. Frey was standing without, and spoke to him, asking tidings:

40. Tell me, Skirnir!  
ere thou thy steed unsaddlest,  
and a foot hence goest,  
what thou hast accomplished  
in Jötunheim,  
for my pleasure or thine?

2. *Þurs*, etc., the names of magical runes.

## Skirnir

41. Barri the grove is named,  
which we both know,  
the grove of tranquil paths.  
Nine nights hence,  
there to Niörd's son  
Gerd will grant delight.

## Frey

42. Long is one night,  
yet longer two will be;  
how shall I three endure.  
Often a month to me  
less has seemed  
than half a night of longing.



## Rígsnál: The Lay of Rig

In ancient Sagas it is related that one of the Æsir named Heimdall, being on a journey to a certain sea-shore, came to a village, where he called himself Rig. In accordance with this Saga is the following:

1. In ancient days, they say,  
along the green ways went  
the powerful and upright  
sagacious Ás,  
the strong and active Rig,  
his onward course pursuing.

2. Forward he went  
on the mid-way,  
and to a dwelling came.  
The door stood ajar,  
he went in,  
fire was on the floor.  
There man and wife sat there,  
hoary-haired, by the hearth,  
Ai and Edda,  
in old guise clad.

3. Rig would counsel  
give to them both,  
and himself seated  
in the middle seat,  
having on either side  
the domestic pair.

4. Then Edda from the ashes  
took a loaf,  
heavy and thick,  
and with bran mixed;  
more besides she laid  
on the middle of the board;  
there in a bowl was broth  
on the table set,  
there was a calf boiled,  
of cates more excellent.

5. Then rose he up,  
 prepared to sleep:  
 Rig would counsel  
 give to them both;  
 laid him down  
 in the middle of the bed;  
 the domestic pair lay  
 one on either side.

6. There he continued  
 three nights together,  
 then departed  
 on the mid-way.  
 Nine months then  
 passed away.

7. Edda a child brought forth:  
 they with water sprinkled  
 its swarthy skin,  
 and named it Thræl.

8. It grew up,  
 and well it throve;  
 of its hands  
 the skin was shriveled,  
 the knuckles knotty,  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 and fingers thick;  
 a hideous countenance it had,  
 a curved back,  
 and protruding heels.

9. He then began  
 his strength to prove,  
 bast to bind,  
 make of it loads;  
 then faggots carried home,  
 the livelong day.



10. Then to the dwelling came  
 a woman walking,  
 scarred were her foot-soles,  
 her arms sunburnt,  
 her nose compressed,  
 her name was Thý.

11. In the middle seat  
 herself she placed;  
 by her sat  
 the house's son.  
 They spoke and whispered,  
 prepared a bed,  
 Thræl and Thý,  
 and days of care.

12. Children they begat,  
 and lived content:  
 Their names, I think, were  
 Hrimr and Fjósnir,  
 Klur and Kleggi,  
 Kefsir, Fulnir,  
 Drumb, Digraldi,  
 Drött and Hösvir,  
 Lút and Leggialdi.  
 Fences they erected,  
 fields manured,  
 tended swine,  
 kept goats,  
 dug turf.

13. The daughters were  
 Drumba and Kumba,  
 Ökkvinkalfa,  
 and Arinnesia,  
 Ysia and Ambatt,  
 Eikintiasna,  
 Tötrughypia,  
 and Trönubeina,  
 whence are sprung  
 the race of thralls.

\*\*\*\*\*

14. Rig then went on,  
in a direct course,  
and came to a house;  
the door stood ajar:  
he went in;  
fire was on the floor,  
man and wife sat there  
engaged at work.

15. The man was planing  
wood for a weaver's beam;  
his beard was trimmed,  
a lock was on his forehead,  
his shirt close;  
he chest stood on the floor.

16. His wife sat by,  
plied her rock,  
with outstretched arms,  
prepared for clothing.  
A hood was on her head,  
a loose sark over her breast,  
a kerchief round her neck,  
studs on her shoulders.  
Afi and Amma  
owned the house.

17. Rig would counsel  
give to them both;  
rose from the table,  
prepared to sleep;  
laid him down  
in the middle of the bed,  
the domestic pair lay  
one on either side.

18. There he continued  
three nights together.  
Nine months then  
passed away.  
Amma a child brought forth,  
they with water sprinkled it,  
and called it Karl.  
The mother in linen swathed  
the ruddy redhead:  
its eyes twinkled.

19. It grew up,  
and well throve;  
learned to tame oxen,  
make a plough,  
houses build,  
and barns construct,  
make carts,  
and the plough drive.

20. Then they home conveyed  
a lass with pendant keys,  
and goatskin kirtle;  
married her to Karl.  
Snör was her name,  
under a veil she sat.  
The couple dwelt together,  
rings exchanged,  
spread couches,  
and a household formed.

21. Children they begat,  
and lived content.  
Hal and Dreng, these were named,  
Held, Thegn, Smith,  
Breidrbondi,  
Bundinskegg,  
Bui and Boddi,  
Brattskegg and Segg.

22. But (the daughters) were thus called,  
 by other names:  
 Snot, Brud, Svanni,  
 Svarri, Sprakki,  
 Fliod, Sprund, and Vif,  
 Feima, Ristil;  
 whence are sprung  
 the races of churls.

\*\*\*\*\*

23. Rig then went thence,  
 in a direct course,  
 and came to a hall:  
 the entrance looked southward,  
 the door was half closed,  
 a ring was on the door-post.

24. He went in;  
 the floor was strewed,  
 a couple sat  
 facing each other,  
 Fadir and Modir,  
 with fingers playing.

25. The husband sat,  
 and twisted string,  
 bent his bow,  
 and arrow-shafts prepared;  
 but the housewife  
 looked on her arms,  
 smoothed her veil,  
 and her sleeves fastened;

26. Her head-gear adjusted.  
 A clasp was on her breast;  
 ample her robe,  
 her sark was blue;  
 brighter was her brow,  
 her breast fairer,  
 her neck whiter  
 than driven snow.

27. Rig would counsel  
give to them both,  
and himself seated  
on the middle seat,  
having on either side  
the domestic pair.

28. Then took Modir  
a figured cloth  
of white linen,  
and the table decked.  
She then took  
thin cakes  
of snow-white wheat,  
and on the table laid.

29. She set forth salvers  
full, adorned with silver,  
on the table game and pork,  
and roasted birds.  
In a can was wine;  
the cups were ornamented.  
They drank and talked;  
the day was fast departing,  
Rig would counsel  
give to them both.

30. Rig then rose,  
the bed prepared;  
there he then remained  
three nights together,  
then departed  
on the mid-way.  
Nine months after that  
passed away.

31. Modir then brought forth a boy;  
in silk they wrapped him,  
with water sprinkled him,  
and named him Jarl.  
Light was his hair,  
bright his cheeks,  
his eyes piercing  
as a young serpent's.

32. There at home  
Jarl grew up,  
learned the shield to shake,  
to fix the string,  
the bow to bend,  
arrows to shaft,  
javelins to hurl,  
spears to brandish,  
horses to ride,  
dogs to let slip,  
swords to draw,  
swimming to practice.

33. Thither from the forest came  
Rig walking,  
Rig walking:  
runes he taught him,  
and his own son declared him,  
whom he bade possess  
his alodial fields,  
his alodial fields,  
his ancient dwellings.

34. Jarl then rode thence,  
 through a murky way,  
 over humid fells,  
 till to a hall he came.  
 His spear he brandished,  
 his shield he shook,  
 made his horse curvet,  
 and his falchion drew,  
 strife began to raise,  
 the field to redden,  
 carnage to make;  
 and conquer lands.

35. Then he ruled alone  
 over eight vills,  
 riches distributed,  
 gave to all  
 treasures and precious things;  
 lank-sided horses,  
 rings he dispersed,  
 and collars cut in pieces.<sup>1</sup>

36. The nobles drove  
 through humid ways,  
 came to a hall,  
 where Hersir dwelt;  
 there they found  
 a slender maiden,  
 fair and elegant,  
 Erna her name.

37. They demanded her,  
 and conveyed her home,  
 to Jarl espoused her;  
 she under the linen<sup>2</sup> went.  
 They together lived,  
 and well throve,  
 had offspring,  
 and old age enjoyed.

1. A common practice: the pieces served as money.

2. The nuptial veil.

38. Bur was the eldest,  
Barn the second,  
Jod and Adal,  
Arfi, Mög,  
Nid and Nidjung.  
They learned games;  
Son and Svein  
swam and at tables played.  
One was named Kund,  
Kon was the youngest.

39. There grew up  
Jarl's progeny;  
horses they broke,  
curved shields,  
cut arrows,  
brandished spears.

40. But the young Kon  
understood runes,  
æfin-runes,  
and aldr-runes;  
he moreover knew  
men to preserve,  
edges to deaden,  
the sea to calm.

41. He knew the voice of birds,  
how fires to mitigate,  
assuage and quench;  
sorrows to allay.  
He of eight men had  
the strength and energy.

42. He with Rig Jarl  
in runes contended,  
artifices practiced,  
and superior proved;  
then acquired  
Rig to be called,  
and skilled in runes.



43. The young Kon rode  
 through swamps and forests,  
 hurled forth darts,  
 and tamed birds.

44. Then sang the crow,  
 sitting lonely on a bough!  
 “Why wilt thou, young Kon:  
 tame the birds?  
 Rather shouldst thou, young Kon!  
 on horses ride  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 and armies overcome.

45. Nor Dan nor Danp  
 halls more costly had,  
 nobler paternal seats,  
 then ye had.  
 They well knew how  
 the keel to ride,  
 the edge to prove,  
 wounds to inflict.

(The rest is wanting.....)



# Ægisdrekka, eða Lokasenna, eða Lokaglepsa

## Ægir's Comotation or Loki's Altercation

Ægir, who is also name Gýmir, had brewed beer for the Æsir, after he had got the great kettle, as has been already related. To the entertainment came Odin and his wife Frigg. Thor did not come, being in the East, but his wife Sif was there, also Bragi and his wife Idun, and Tý, who was one-handed, Fenrisulf having bitten off his hand while being bound. Besides these were Niörd and his wife Skadi, Frey and Freyja, and Odin's son Vidar. Loki too was there, and Frey's attendants, Byggvir and Beyla. Many other Æsir and Alfar were also present.

Ægir had two servants, Fimafeng and Eldir. Bright gold was there used instead of fire-light. The beer served itself to the guests. The place was a great sanctuary. The guests greatly praised the excellence of Ægir's servants. This Loki could not hear with patience, and so slew Fimafeng; whereupon the Æsir shook their shields, exclaimed against Loki, chased him into the forest, and then returned to drink. Loki came again, and found Eldir standing without, whom he thus addressed:

1. Tell me, Eldir!  
ere thou thy foot settest  
one step forward,  
on what converse  
the sons of the triumphant gods  
at their potation?

Eldir  
2. Of their arms converse,  
and of their martial fame,  
the sons of the triumphant gods.  
Of the Æsir and the Alfar  
that are here within  
not one has a friendly word for thee.

Loki  
3. I will go  
into Ægir's halls,  
to see the comotation.  
Strife and hate  
to the Æsir's sons I bear,  
and will mix their mead with bale.

Eldir

4. Knowest thou not that if thou goest  
into Ægir's halls  
to see the comptation,  
but contumely and clamor  
pourest forth on the kindly powers,  
they will wipe it all off on thee.

Loki

5. Knowest thou not, Eldir,  
that if we two  
with bitter words contend,  
I shall be rich  
in answers,  
if thou sayest too much?

Loki then went into the hall, but when those present saw who was come in, they all sat silent.

Loki

6. I Loft am come thirsty  
into this hall,  
from a long journey,  
to beseech the Æsir  
one draught to give me  
of the bright mead.

7. Why gods! are ye so silent,  
so reserved,  
that ye cannot speak?  
A seat and place  
choose for me at your board,  
or bid me hie me hence.

Bragi

8. A seat and place  
will the Æsir never  
choose for thee at their board;  
for well the Æsir know  
for whom they ought to hold  
a joyous comptation.

Loki

9. Odin! dost thou remember  
 when we in early days  
 blended our blood together?  
 When to taste beer  
 thou didst constantly refuse,  
 unless to both 'twas offered?

Odin

10. Rise up, Vidar!  
 and let the wolf's sire  
 sit at our comotation;  
 that Loki may not utter  
 words of contumely  
 in Ægir's hall.

Vidar then rising, presented Loki with drink, who before drinking thus addressed.

11. Hail, Æsir!

Hail, Asyniur!  
 And ye, all-holy gods!  
 all, save that one As,  
 who sits within there,  
 Bragi, on yonder bench.

Bragi

12. A horse and falchion  
 I from my stores will give thee,  
 and also with a ring reward thee,  
 if thou the Æsir wilt not  
 requite with malice.  
 Provoke not the gods against thee.

Loki

13. Of horse and rings  
 wilt thou ever, Bragi!  
 be in want.  
 Of the Æsir and the Alfar,  
 that are here present,  
 in conflict thou art the most backward,  
 and in the play of darts most timid.

Bragi

14. I know that were I without,  
as I am now within,  
the hall of Ægir,  
I thy head would  
bear in my hand,  
and so for lying punish thee.

Loki

15. Valiant on thy seat art thou, Bragi!  
but so thou shouldst not be,  
Bragi, the bench's pride!  
Go and fight,  
if thou art angry;  
a brave man sits not considering.

Idun

16. I pray thee, Bragi!  
let avail the bond of children,  
and of all adopted sons,  
and to Loki speak not  
in reproachful words,  
in Ægir's hall.

Loki

17. Be silent, Idun!  
of all women I declare thee  
most fond of men,  
since thou thy arms,  
carefully washed, didst twine  
round thy brother's murderer.

Idun

18. Loki I address not  
with opprobrious words,  
in Ægir's hall.  
Bragi I soothe,  
by beer excited.  
I desire not that angry ye fight.

Gefion

19. Why will ye, Æsir twain,  
here within,  
strive with reproachful words?  
Loft perceives not  
that he is deluded,  
and is urged on by fate.

Loki

20. Be silent, Gefion!  
I will now just mention,  
how that fair youth  
thy mind corrupted,  
who thee a necklace gave,  
and around whom thou thy limbs didst twine?

Odin

21. Thou art raving, Loki!  
and hast lost thy wits,  
in calling Gefion's anger on thee;  
for all men's destinies,  
I ween, she knows  
as thoroughly as I do.

Loki

22. Be silent, Odin!  
Thou never couldst allot  
conflicts between men:  
oft hast thou given to those  
to whom thou oughtest not  
victory to cowards.

Odin

23. Knowest thou that I gave  
to those I ought not  
victory to cowards?  
Thou was eight winters  
on the earth below,  
a milch cow and a woman,  
and didst there bear children.  
Now that, methinks, betokens a base nature.

Loki

24. But, it is said, thou wentest  
with tottering steps in Samsö,  
and knocked at houses as a Vala.  
In likeness of a fortune teller,  
thou wentest among people;  
Now that, methinks, betokens a base nature.

Frigg

25. Your doings  
ye should never  
publish among men,  
what ye, Æsir twain,  
did in days of yore.  
Ever forgotten be men's former deeds!

Loki

26. Be thou silent, Frigg!  
Thou art Fjörgyn's daughter,  
and ever hast been fond of men,  
since Ve and Vili, it is said,  
thou, Vidrir's wife, didst  
both to thy bosom take.

Frigg

27. Know thou that if I had,  
in Ægir's halls,  
a son like Baldr,  
out thou shouldst not go  
from the Æsir's sons:  
thou should'st have been fiercely assailed.

Loki

28. But wilt thou, Frigg!  
that of my wickedness  
I more recount?  
I am the cause  
that thou seest not  
Baldr riding to the halls.



Freyja

29. Mad art thou, Loki!  
in recounting  
thy foul misdeeds.  
Frigg, I believe,  
knows all that happens,  
although she says it not.

Loki

30. Be thou silent, Freyja!  
I know thee full well;  
thou art not free from vices:  
of the Æsir and the Alfar,  
that are herein,  
each has been thy paramour.

Freyja

31. False is thy tongue.  
Henceforth it will, I think,  
prate no good to thee.  
Wroth with thee are the Æsir,  
and the Asyniur.  
Sad shalt thou home depart.

Loki

32. Be silent, Freyja!  
Thou art a sorceress,  
and with much evil blended;  
since against thy brother thou  
the gentle powers excited.  
And then, Freyja! what didst thou do?

Njörd

33. It is no great wonder,  
if silk-clad dames  
get themselves husbands, lovers;  
but 'tis a wonder that a wretched Ás,  
that has borne children,  
should herein enter.

Loki

34. Be silent, Niörd!  
 Thou wast sent eastward hence,  
 a hostage from the gods.  
 Hýmír's daughter had thee  
 for a utensil,  
 and flowed into thy mouth.<sup>1</sup>

Niörd

35. 'Tis to me a solace,  
 as I a long way hence  
 was sent, a hostage from the gods,  
 that I had a son,  
 whom no one hates,  
 and accounted is a chief among the Æsir.

Loki

36. Cease now, Niörd!  
 in bounds contain thyself;  
 I will no longer keep it secret:  
 it was with thy sister  
 thou hadst such a son;  
 hardly worse than thyself.

Tý

37. Frey is best  
 of all the exalted gods  
 in the Æsir's courts:  
 no maid he makes to weep,  
 no wife of man,  
 and from bonds looses all.

Loki

38. Be silent, Tý!  
 Thou couldst never settle  
 a strife 'twixt two;  
 of thy right hand also  
 I must mention make,  
 which Fenrir from thee tore.

1. The events related in this strophe are probably a mere perversion, by the poet, of what we know of Niörd's history.

Tý

39. I of a hand am wanting,  
but thou of honest fame;  
sad is the lack of either.  
Nor is the wolf at ease:  
he in bonds must bide,  
until the gods' destruction.

Loki

40. Be silent, Tý;  
to thy wife it happened  
to have a son by me.  
Nor rag nor penny ever  
hadst thou, poor wretch!  
for this injury.

Frey

41. I the wolf see lying  
at the river's mouth,  
until the powers are swept away.  
So shalt thou be bound,  
if thou art not silent,  
thou framer of evil.

Loki

42. With gold thou boughtest  
Gýmir's daughter,  
and so gavest away thy sword:  
but when Muspell's sons  
through the dark forest ride,  
thou, unhappy, wilt not  
have wherewith to fight.

Byggvir

43. Know that were I of noble race,  
like Ingun's Frey,  
and had so fair a dwelling,  
than marrow softer I would bray  
that ill-boding crow,  
and crush him limb by limb.

Loki

44. What little thing is that I see  
wagging its tail,  
and snapping eagerly?  
At the ears of Frey  
thou shouldst ever be,  
and clatter under mills.

Byggvir

45. Byggvir I am named,  
and am thought alert,  
by all gods and men;  
therefore am I joyful here,  
that all the sons of Hropt  
drink beer together.

Loki

46. Be silent, Byggvir!  
Thou couldst never  
dole out food to men,  
when, lying in thy truckle bed,  
thou wast not to be found,  
while men were fighting.

Heimdall

47. Loki, thou art drunk,  
and hast lost thy wits.  
Why dost thou not leave off, Loki?  
But drunkenness  
so rules every man,  
that he knows not of his garrulity.

Loki

48. Be silent, Heimdall!  
For thee in early days  
was that hateful life decreed:  
with a wet back  
thou must ever be,  
and keep watch as guardian of the gods.

Skadi

49. Thou art merry, Loki!  
 Not long wilt thou  
 frisk with an unbound tail;  
 for thee, on a rock's point,  
 with the entrails of thy ice-cold son,  
 the gods will bind.

Loki

50. Know, if on a rock's point,  
 with the entrails of my ice-cold son,  
 the gods will bind me,  
 that first and foremost  
 I was at the slaying,  
 when we assailed Thiassi.

Skadi

51. Know, if first and foremost  
 thou wast at the slaying,  
 when ye assailed Thiassi,  
 that from my dwellings  
 and fields shall to thee  
 ever cold counsels come.

Loki

52. Milder was thou of speech  
 to Laufey's son,  
 when to thy bed thou didst invite me.  
 Such matters must be mentioned,  
 if we accurately must  
 recount our vices.

Then Sif came forth, and poured out mead for Loki in an icy cup, saying:

53. Hail to thee, Loki!  
 and this cool cup receive,  
 full of old mead:  
 at least me alone,  
 among the blameless Æsir race,  
 leave stainless.

He took the horn, drank, and said:

54. So alone shouldst thou be,  
hadst thou strict and prudent been  
towards thy mate;  
but one I know,  
and, I think, know him well,  
a favoured rival of Hlorridi,  
and that is the wily Loki.

Beyla  
55. The fells all tremble:  
I think Hlorridi  
is from journeying home.  
He will bid be quiet  
him who here insults  
all gods and men.

Loki  
56. Be silent, Beyla!  
Thou art Byggvir's wife,  
and with much evil mingled:  
never came a greater monster  
among the Æsir's sons.  
Thou art a dirty strumpet.

Thor then came in and said:

57. Silence, thou impure being!  
My mighty hammer, Mjöllnir,  
shall stop thy prating.  
I will thy head  
from thy neck strike;  
then will thy life be ended.

Loki  
58. Now the son of earth  
is hither come.  
Why dost thou chafe so, Thor?  
Thou wilt not dare do so,  
when with the wolf thou hast to fight,  
and he the all-powerful father swallows whole.

Thor

59. Silence, thou impure being!  
 My mighty hammer, Mjöllnir,  
 shall stop thy prating.  
 Up I will hurl thee  
 to the east region,  
 and none shall see thee after.

Loki

60. Of thy eastern travels  
 thou shouldst never  
 to people speak,  
 since in a glove-thumb  
 thou, Einheri! wast doubled up,  
 and hardly thoughtest thou was Thor.

Thor

61. Silence, thou impure being!  
 My mighty hammer, Mjöllnir,  
 shall stop thy prating;  
 with this right hand I, Hrugnir's bane,  
 will smite thee,  
 so that thy every bone be broken.

Loki

62. 'Tis my intention  
 a long life to live,  
 though with thy hammer  
 thou dost threaten me.  
 Skrymir's thongs  
 seemed to thee hard,  
 when at the food thou couldst not get,  
 when, in full health, of hunger dying.

Thor

63. Silence, thou impure being!  
 My mighty hammer, Mjöllnir,  
 shall stop thy prating.  
 Hrungnir's bane  
 shall cast thee down to Hel,  
 beneath the grating of the dead.

Loki

64. I have said before the Æsir,  
I have said before the Æsir's sons,  
that which my mind suggested:  
but for thee alone  
will I go out;  
because I know that thou wilt fight.

65. Ægir! thou hast brewed beer;  
but thou never shalt henceforth  
a comotation hold.  
All thy possessions,  
which are herein,  
flame shall play over,  
and on thy back shall burn thee.

After this Loki, in the likeness of a salmon, cast himself into the waterfall of Franangr, where the Æsir caught him, and bound him with the entrails of his son Nari; but his other son, Narfi, was changed into a wolf. Skadi took a venomous serpent, and fastened it up over Loki's face. The venom trickled down from it. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat by, and held a basin under the venom; and when the basin was full, carried the venom out. Meanwhile the venom dropped on Loki, who shrank from it so violently that the whole earth trembled. This causes what are not called earthquakes.



## Fiölsvinnsmál: The Lay of Fiölsvith

1. From the outward wall  
he saw one ascending to  
the seat of the giant race.

Fiölsvith  
Along the humid ways  
haste the back hence,  
here, wretch! is no place for thee.

2. What monster is it  
before the fore-court standing,  
and hovering round the perilous flame?  
Whom dost thou seek?  
Of what art thou in quest?  
Or what, friendless being! desirest thou to know?

Wanderer  
3. What monster is that,  
before the fore-court standing,  
who to the wayfarer offers not hospitality?  
Void of honest fame,  
prattler! hast thou lived:  
but hence hie thee home.

Fiölsvith  
4. Fiölsvith is my name;  
wise I am of mind,  
though of food not prodigal.  
Within these courts  
thou shalt never come:  
so now, wretch! take thyself off.

Wanderer  
5. From the eye's delight  
few are disposed to hurry,  
where there is something  
pleasant to be seen.  
These walls, methinks,  
shine around golden halls.  
Here I could live contented with my lot.

Fiölsvith

6. Tell me, youth;  
of whom thou art born,  
or of what race hath sprung.

Wanderer

7. Vindkald I am called,  
Varkald was my father named,  
his sire was Fiölkald.

8. Tell me, Fiölsvith!  
that which I will ask thee,  
and I desire to know:  
who here holds sway,  
and has power over  
these lands and costly halls?

Fiölsvith

9. Menglöd is her name,  
her mother her begat  
with Svaf, Thorin's son.  
She here holds sway,  
and has power over  
these lands and costly halls.

Vindkald

10. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
what the grate is called,  
than which among the gods  
mortals never saw a greater artifice?

Fiölsvith

11. Thryngiöll it is called,  
and Solblindi's  
three sons constructed it:  
a fetter fastens  
every wayfarer,  
who lifts it from its opening.

Vindkald

12. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 what that structure is called,  
 than which among the gods  
 mortals never saw a greater artifice?

Fiölsvith

13. Gastropnir it is called,  
 and I constructed it  
 of Leirbrimir's limbs.  
 I have so supported it,  
 that it will ever stand  
 while the world lasts.

Vindkald

14. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 what those dogs are called,  
 that chase away the giantesses,  
 and safety to the fields restore?

Fiölsvith

15. Gifr the one is called,  
 the other Geri,  
 if thou that wouldst know.  
 Eleven watches  
 they will keep,  
 until the powers perish.

Vindkald

16. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 whether any man  
 can enter  
 while those fierce assailants sleep?

Fiölsvith

17. Alternate sleep  
 was strictly to them enjoined,  
 since to the watch they were appointed.  
 One sleeps by night,  
 by day the other,  
 so that no wight can enter if he comes.

Vindkald

18. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
whether there is any food  
that men can get,  
such that they can run in while they eat?

Fiölsvith

19. Two repasts  
lie in Vidofnir's wings,  
if thou that wouldst know:  
that is alone such food  
as men can give them,  
and run in while they eat.

Vindkald

20. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
what that tree is called  
that with its branches spreads itself  
over every land?

Fiölsvith

21. Mimameidr it is called;  
but few men know  
from what roots it springs:  
it by that will fall  
which fewest know.  
Nor fire nor iron will harm it.

Vindkald

22. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
to what the virtue is  
of that famed tree applied,  
which nor fire nor iron will harm?

Fiölsvith

23. Its fruit shall  
on the fire be laid,  
for labouring women;  
out then will pass  
what would in remain:  
so it is a creator of mankind.

Vindkald

24. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 what the cock is called  
 that sits in that lofty tree,  
 and all-glittering is with gold?

Fiölsvith

25. Vidofnir he is called;  
 in the clear air he stands,  
 in the boughs of Mima's tree:  
 afflictions only brings,  
 together indissoluble,  
 the swart bird at his lonely meal.

Vindkald

26. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 whether there be any weapon,  
 before which Vidofnir may  
 fall to Hel's abode?

27. Hævatein the twig is named,  
 and Lopt plucked it,  
 down by the gate of Death.  
 In an iron chest it lies  
 with Sinmoera,  
 and is with nine strong locks secured.

Vindkald

28. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 whether he will alive return,  
 who seeks after,  
 and will take, that rod?

Fiölsvith

29. He will return  
 who seeks after,  
 and will take, the rod,  
 if he bears that  
 which few possess  
 to the dame of the glassy clay.

Vindkald

30. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
whether there is any treasure,  
that mortals can obtain,  
at which the pale giantess will rejoice?

Fiölsvith

31. The bright sickle  
that lies in Vidofnir's wings,  
thou in a bag shalt bear,  
and to Sinmoera give,  
before she will think fit  
to lend an arm for conflict.

Vindkald

32. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
what this hall is called,  
which is girt round  
with a curious flickering flame?

Fiölsvith

33. Hyr it is called,  
and it will long  
tremble as on a lance's point.  
This sumptuous house  
shall, for ages hence,  
be but from hearsay known.

Vindkald

34. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
which of the Æsir's sons  
has that constructed,  
which within the court I saw?

Fiölsvith

35. Uni and Iri,  
Bari and Ori,  
Var and Vegdrasil,  
Dorri and Uri,  
Delling and Atvard,  
Lidskialf, Loki.

Vindkald

36. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 what that mount is called  
 on which I see  
 a splendid maiden stand?

Fiölsvith

37. Hyfiaberg 'tis called,  
 and long has it a solace been  
 to the bowed-down and sorrowful:  
 each woman becomes healthy,  
 although a year's disease she have,  
 if she can but ascend it.

Vindkald

38. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 how those maids are called,  
 who sit at Menglöd's knees  
 in harmony together?

Fiölsvith

39. Hlif the first is called,  
 the second is Hlifthursa,  
 the third Thiodvarta,  
 Biört and Blid,  
 Blidr, Frid,  
 Eir and Örboda.

Vindkald

40. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
 whether they protect  
 those who offer to them,  
 if it should, be needful?

Fiölsvith

41. Every summer  
 in which men offer to them,  
 at the holy place,  
 no pestilence so great shall come  
 to the sons of men,  
 but they will free each from peril.

Vindkald

42. Tell me, Fiölsvith! etc.  
whether there is any man  
that may in Menglöd's  
soft arms sleep?

Fiölsvith

43. There is no man  
who may in Menglöd's  
soft arms sleep,  
save only Svipdag;  
to him the sun-bright maid  
is for wife betrothed.

Vindkald

44. Set the doors open!  
Let the gate stand wide;  
here thou mayest Svipdag see;  
but yet go learn  
if Menglöd will  
accept my love.

Fiölsvith

45. Hear, Menglöd!  
A man is hither come:  
go and behold the stranger;  
the dogs rejoice;  
the house is opened.  
I think it must be Svipdag.

Menglöd

46. Fierce ravens shall,  
on the high gallows,  
tear out thy eyes,  
if thou art lying,  
that hither from afar is come  
the youth unto my halls.



47. Whence art thou come?  
 Whence hast thou journeyed?  
 How do thy kindred call thee?  
 Of thy race and name  
 I must have a token,  
 if I was betrothed to thee.

Svipdag

48. Svipdag I am named,  
 Solbiart was my father named;  
 thence the winds on the cold ways drove me.  
 Urd's decree  
 may no one gainsay,  
 however lightly uttered.

Menglöd

49. Welcome thou art:  
 my will I have obtained;  
 greeting a kiss shall follow.  
 A sight unlooked-for  
 gladdens most persons,  
 when one the other loves.

50. Long have I sat  
 on my loved hill,  
 day and night  
 expecting thee.  
 Now that is come to pass  
 which I have hoped,  
 that thou, dear youth, again  
 to my halls art come.

Svipdag

51. Longing I have undergone  
 for thy love;  
 and thou, for my affection.  
 Now it is certain,  
 that we shall pass  
 our lives together.



## Hyndlulioð: The Lay of Hyndla

Freyja rides with her favourite Ottar to Hyndla, a Vala, for the purpose of obtaining information respecting Ottar's genealogy, such information being required by him in a legal dispute with Angantyr. Having obtained this, Freyja further requests Hyndla to give Ottar a portion (*minnisöl*) that will enable him to remember all that has been told him. This she refuses, but is forced to comply by Freyja having encircled her cave with flames. She gives him the potion, but accompanied by a malediction, which is by Freyja turned to a blessing.

Freyja

1. Wake, maid of maids!  
Wake, my friend!  
Hyndla! Sister!  
who in the cavern dwellest.  
Now there is a dark of darks;  
we will both  
to Valhall ride,  
and to the holy fane.

2. Let us Heriafather pray  
into our minds to enter,  
he gives and grants  
gold to the deserving.  
He gave to Hermod  
a helm and corslet,  
and from him Sigmund  
a sword received.

3. Victory to his sons he gives,  
but to some riches;  
eloquence to the great,  
and to men, wit;  
fair wind he gives to traders,  
but poesy to skalds;  
valor he gives  
to many a warrior.

4. She to Thor will offer,  
 she to him will pray,  
 that to thee he may  
 be well disposed;  
 although he bears ill will  
 to Jötun females.

5. Now of thy wolves take one  
 from out the stall;  
 let him run  
 with runic rein.<sup>1</sup>

Hyndla

6. Sluggish is thy hog  
 the god's way to tread:

Freyja

7. I will my noble  
 palfrey saddle.

Hyndla

8. False art thou, Freyja!  
 who tempest me:  
 by thy eyes thou showest it,  
 so fixed upon us;  
 while thou thy man hast  
 on the dead-road,<sup>2</sup>  
 the young Ottar,  
 Innstein's son.

Freyja

9. Dull art thou, Hyndla!  
 methinks thou dreamest,  
 since thou sayest that my man  
 is on the dead-road with me;  
 there where my hog sparkles  
 with its golden bristles,  
 hight Hildisvini,  
 which for me made

1. That is, with a rein inscribed with runes.

2. The road to Valhall.

the two skilful dwarfs,  
 Dain and Nabbi.  
 From the saddle we will talk:  
 let us sit,  
 and of princely  
 families discourse,  
 of those chieftains  
 who from the gods descend.  
 They have contested  
 for the dead's gold,  
 Ottar the young  
 and Angantyr.

10. A duty 'tis to act  
 so that the young prince  
 his paternal heritage may have,  
 after his kindred.

11. An offer-stead to me he raised,  
 with stones constructed;  
 now is that stone  
 as glass become.  
 With the blood of oxen  
 he newly sprinkled it.  
 Ottar ever trusted  
 in the Asyniur.

12. Now let us reckon up  
 the ancient families,  
 and the races of  
 exalted men.  
 Who are the Skiöldings?  
 Who are the Skilfings?  
 Who the Ödlings?  
 Who the Ylfings?  
 Who the höld-born?  
 Who the hers-born?  
 The choicest race of men  
 under heaven?

Hyndla

13. Thou, Ottar! art  
of Innstein born,  
but Innstein was  
from Alf the Old,  
Alf was from Ulf.  
Ulf from Sæfari,  
but Sæfari  
from Svan the Red.

14. Thy father had a mother,  
for her necklaces famed,  
she, I think, was named  
Hledis the priestess;  
Frodi her father was,  
and her mother Friant:  
all that stock is reckoned  
among chieftains.

15. Ali was of old  
of men the strongest,  
Halfdan before him,  
the highest of the Skiöldungs;  
(Famed were the wars  
by those chieftains led)  
his deeds seemed to soar  
to the skirts of heaven.

16. By Eimund aided,  
chief of men,  
he Sigtrygg slew  
with the cold steel.  
He Almveig had to wife,  
first of women.  
They begat and had  
eighteen sons.

17. From them the Skiöldungs,  
 from them the Skilfings,  
 from them the Ödlings,  
 from them the Ynglings,  
 from them the höld-born,  
 from them the hers-born,  
 the choicest race of men  
 under heaven.  
 All that race is thine,  
 Ottar Heimski!

18. Hildegun  
 her mother was,  
 of Svafa born  
 and a sea-king.  
 All that race is thine,  
 Ottar Heimski!  
 Carest thou to know?  
 Wishest thou a longer narrative?

19. Dag wedded Thora,  
 mother of warriors;  
 of that race were born  
 the noble champions,  
 Fradmar, Gyrd,  
 and the Frekis both,  
 Am, Jösur, Mar,  
 Alf the Old.  
 Carest thou this to know?  
 Wishest thou a longer narrative?

20. Ketil their friend was named,  
 heir of Klyp;  
 he was maternal grandsire  
 of thy mother.  
 Then was Frodi  
 yet before Kari,  
 but the eldest born  
 was Alf.

21. Nanna was next,  
Nökkvi's daughter;  
her son was  
thy father's kinsman,  
ancient is that kinship.  
I knew both  
Brodd and Hörfi.  
All that race is thine,  
Ottar Heimski!

22. Isolf, Asolf,  
Ölmod's sons  
and Skurhild's  
Skekki's daughter;  
thou shalt yet count  
chieftains many.  
All that race is thine,  
Ottar Heimski!

23. Gunnar, Balk,  
Grim, Ardskafi,  
Jarnskiöld, Thorir,  
Ulf, Ginandi,  
Bui and Brami,  
Barri and Reifnir,  
Tind and Tyrfing,  
the two Haddingis.  
All that race is thine,  
Ottar Heimski!

24. To toil and tumult  
were the sons  
of Arngrim born,  
and of Eyfura:  
ferocious berserker,  
calamity of every kind,  
by land and sea,  
like fire they carried.  
All that race is thine,  
Ottar Heimski!



25. I knew both  
 Brodd and Hörfi,  
 they were in the court  
 of Hrolf the Old;  
 all descended  
 from Jörmunrek,  
 son-in-law of Sigurd.  
 (Listen to my story)  
 the dread of nations,  
 him who Fafnir slew.

26. He was a king,  
 from Völsung sprung,  
 and Hiördis  
 from Hrödung;  
 but Eylimi  
 from the Ödlings.  
 All that race it thine,  
 Ottar Heimski!

27. Gunnar and Högni,  
 sons of Giuki;  
 and Gudrun likewise,  
 their sister.  
 Guttorm was not  
 of Giuki's race,  
 although he brother was  
 of them both.  
 All that race is thine,  
 Ottar Heimski!

28. Harald Heildetönn,  
 born of Hrærekir  
 Slöngvanbaugi;  
 he was a son of Aud,  
 Aud the rich  
 was Ivar's daughter;  
 but Radbard was  
 Randver's father.  
 They were heroes  
 to the gods devoted.  
 All that race is thine,  
 Ottar Heimski!

29. There were eleven  
 Æsir reckoned,  
 when Baldr on  
 the pile was laid;  
 him Vali showed himself  
 worthy to avenge,  
 his own brother:  
 he the slayer slew.  
 All that race is thine,  
 Ottar Heimskil!

30. Baldr's father was  
 son of Bur:  
 Frey to wife had Gerd,  
 she was Gymir's daughter,  
 from Jötuns sprung  
 and Aurboda;  
 Thiassi also  
 was their relation,  
 that haughty Jötun;  
 Skadi was his daughter.

31. We tell thee much,  
 and remember more:  
 I admonish thee thus much to know.  
 Wishest thou yet a longer narrative?

32. Haki was not the worst  
 of Hvedna's sons,  
 and Hiövard  
 was Hvedna's father;  
 Heid and Hrossthiof were  
 of Hrimnir's race.

33. All the Valas are  
 from Vidolf;  
 all the soothsayers  
 from Vilmeidr,  
 all the sorcerers  
 from Svarthöfdi;  
 all the Jötuns  
 come from Ymir.

34. We tell thee much,  
and more remember,  
I admonish thee thus much to know.  
Wishest thou yet a longer narrative?

35. There was one born,  
in times of old,  
with wondrous might endowed,  
of origin divine:  
nine Jötun maids  
gave birth  
to the gracious god,  
at the world's margin.

36. Gialp gave him birth,  
Greip gave him birth,  
Eistla gave him birth,  
and Angeia;  
Ulfrun gave him birth,  
and Eyrgiafa,  
Imd and Atla,  
and Jarnsaxa.

37. The boy was nourished  
with the strength of earth,  
with the ice-cold sea,  
and with Son's blood.  
We tell thee much,  
and more remember.  
I admonish thee thus much to know.  
Wishest thou a yet longer narrative?

38. Loki begat the wolf  
with Angrboda,  
but Sleipnir he begat  
with Svadilfari:  
one monster seemed  
of all most deadly,  
which from Byleist's  
brother sprang.

39. Loki, scorched up  
in his heart's affections,  
had found a half-burnt  
woman's heart.  
Loki became guileful  
from that wicked woman;  
thence in the world  
are all giantesses come.

40. Ocean towers with storms  
to heaven itself,  
flows o'er the land;  
the air is rent:  
thence come snows  
and rapid winds;  
then it is decreed  
that the rain should cease.

41. There was one born  
greater than all,  
the boy was nourished  
with the strength of earth;  
he was declared a ruler,  
mightiest and richest,  
allied by kinship  
to all princes.

42. Then shall another come,  
yet mightier,  
although I dare not  
his name declare.  
Few may see  
further forth  
than when Odin  
meets the wolf.

Freyja

43. Bear thou the memory-cup  
to my guest,  
so that he may all  
the words repeat  
of this discourse,  
on the third morn,  
when he and Angantyr  
reckon up races.

Hyndla

44. Go thou quickly hence,  
I long to sleep;  
more of my wondrous power  
thou gettest not from me.  
Thou runnest, my hot friend,  
out at nights,  
as among he-goats  
the she-goat goes.

45. Thou hast run thyself mad,  
ever longing;  
many a one has stolen  
under thy girdle.  
Thou runnest, my hot friend,  
out at nights,  
as among he-goats  
the she-goat goes.

Freyja

46. Fire I strike  
over thee, dweller of the wood!  
so that thou goest not  
ever away from hence.

Hyndla

47. Fire I see burning,  
and the earth blazing;  
many will have  
their lives to save.  
Bear thou the cup  
to Ottar's hand,  
the mead with venom mingled,  
in an evil hour!

Freyja

48. Thy malediction  
shall be powerless;  
although thou, Jötun-maid!  
dost evil threaten.  
He shall drink  
delicious draughts.  
All the gods I pray  
to favour Ottar.

## Gróagald: The Incantation of Groa

Son

1. Wake up, Groa!  
wake up, good woman!  
at the gates of death I wake thee!  
if thou remembrest,  
that thou thy son badest  
to thy grave-mound to come.

Mother

2. What now troubles  
my only son?  
With what affliction art thou burthened,  
that thou thy mother callest,  
who to dust is come,  
and from human homes departed?

Son

3. A hateful game  
thou, crafty woman, didst set before me,  
whom my father has in his bosom cherished,  
when thou bides me go  
no one knows whither,  
Menglöd to meet.

Mother

4. Long is the journey,  
long are the ways,  
long are men's desires.  
If it so fall out,  
that thou thy will obtainest,  
the event must then be as it may.

Son

5. Sing to me songs  
which are good.  
Mother! protect thy son.  
Dead on my way  
I fear to be.  
I seem to young in years.

Mother

6. I will sing to thee first  
 one that is thought most useful,  
 which Rind sang to Ran;  
 that from thy shoulders thou shouldst cast  
 what to thee seems irksome:  
 let thyself thyself direct.

7. A second I will sing to thee,  
 as thou hast to wander  
 joyless on the ways.  
 May Urd's protection  
 hold thee on every side,  
 where thou seest turpitude.

8. A third I will sing to thee.  
 If the mighty rivers  
 to thy life's peril fall,  
 Horn and Rud,  
 may they flow down to Hel,  
 and for thee ever be diminished.

9. A fourth I will sing to thee.  
 If foes assail thee  
 ready on the dangerous road,  
 their hearts shall fail them,  
 and to thee be power,  
 and their minds to peace be turned.

10. A fifth I will sing to thee.  
 If bonds be  
 cast on thy limbs,  
 friendly spells I will let  
 on thy joints be sung,  
 and the lock from thy arms shall start,  
 (and from thy feet the fetter.)

11. A sixth I will sing to thee.  
 If on the sea thou comest,  
 more stormy than men have known it,  
 air and water  
 shall in a bag attend thee,  
 and a tranquil course afford thee.



12. A seventh I will sing to thee.  
If on a mountain high  
frost should assail thee,  
deadly cold shall not  
thy carcase injure,  
nor draw thy body to thy limbs.

13. An eighth I will sing to thee.  
If night overtake thee,  
when out on the misty way,  
that the dead Christian woman  
no power may have  
to do thee harm.

14. A ninth I will sing to thee.  
If with a far-famed spear-armed Jötun  
thou words exchangest,  
of words and wit  
to thy mindful heart  
abundance shall be given.

15. Go now ever  
where calamity may be,  
and no harm shall obstruct thy wishes.  
On a stone fast in the earth  
I have stood within the door,  
while songs I sang to thee.

16. My son! bear hence  
thy mother's words,  
and in thy breast let them dwell;  
for happiness abundant  
shalt thou have in life,  
while of my words thou art mindful.



## Solarlióð: The Song of the Sun

This singular poem, the authorship of which is, in some manuscripts, assigned to Sæmund himself, may be termed a Voice from the Dead, given under the form of a dream, in which a deceased father is supposed to address his son from another world. The first 7 strophes seem hardly connected with the following ones, which, as far as the 32<sup>nd</sup> consist chiefly in aphorisms with examples, some closely resembling those in the *Hávamál*. In the remaining portion is given the recital of the last illness of the supposed speaker, his death, and the scenes his soul passed through on the way to its final home.

The composition exhibits a strange mixture of Christianity and Heathenism, whence it would seem that the poet's own religion was in a transition state. Of the allusions to Heathenism it is, however, to be observed that they are chiefly to persons and actions of which there is no trace in the Odinic mythology, as known to us, and are possibly the fruits of the poet's own imagination. The title of the poem is no doubt derived from the allusion to the Sun at the beginning of the strophes 39-45.

For an elaborate and learned commentary, with an interlinear version of *the Song of the Sun*, the reader may consult *Les Chants de Sol*, by Professor Bergmann, Strassbourg & Paris, 1858.

1. Of life and property  
a fierce freebooter  
despoiled mankind;  
over the ways  
beset by him  
might no one living pass.
2. Alone he ate  
most frequently,  
no one invited he to his repast;  
until weary,  
and with failing strength,  
a wandering guest  
came from the way.
3. In need of drink  
that way-worn man,  
and hungry feigned to be:  
with trembling heart  
he seemed to trust  
him who had been so evil-minded.

4. Meat and drink  
 to the weary one he gave,  
 all with upright heart;  
 on God he thought,  
 the traveller's wants supplied;  
 for he felt he was an evil-doer.

5. Up stood the guest,  
 he evil meditated,  
 he had not been kindly treated;  
 his sin within him swelled,  
 he while sleeping murdered  
 his wary cautious host.

6. The God of heaven  
 he prayed for help,  
 when being struck he woke;  
 but he was doomed the sins of him  
 on himself to take,  
 whom sackless he had slain.

7. Holy angels came  
 from heaven above,  
 and took to them his soul:  
 in a life of purity  
 it shall ever live  
 with the almighty God.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

8. Riches and health  
 no one may command,  
 though all go smoothly with him.  
 To many that befalls  
 which they least expect.  
 No one may command his tranquility.

9. Unnar and Sævaldi  
 never imagined  
 that happiness would fall on them,  
 yet naked they became,  
 and of all bereft,  
 and, like wolves, ran to the forest.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

10. The force of pleasure  
has many a one bewailed.  
Cares are often caused by women;  
pernicious they become,  
although the mighty God  
them pure created.

11. United were  
Svafud and Skarthedin,  
neither might without the other be,  
until to frenzy they were driven  
for a woman;  
she was destined for their perdition.

12. On account of that fair maid,  
neither of them cared  
for games or joyous days;  
no other thing  
could they in memory bear  
then that bright form.

13. Sad to them were  
the gloomy nights,  
no sweet sleep might they enjoy:  
but from that anguish  
rose hate intense  
between the faithful friends.

14. Hostile deeds  
are in most places  
fiercely avenged.  
To the holm they went,<sup>1</sup>  
for that fair woman,  
and each one found his death.  
\*\*\*\*\*

15. Arrogance should no one entertain:  
I indeed have seen  
that those who follow her,

1. That is, *they engaged in single combat*; the spot for such encounters being called a *holm*, consisting of a circular space marked out by stones.

for the most part,  
turn from God.

16. Rich were both,  
Radey and Vebogi,  
and thought only of their well-being;  
now they sit  
and turn their sores  
to various hearths.

17. They in themselves confided,  
and thought themselves alone to be  
above all people;  
but their lot  
Almighty God was pleased  
otherwise to appoint.

18. A life of luxury they led,  
in many ways,  
and had gold for sport.  
Now they are requited,  
so that they must walk  
between frost and fire.

19. To thy enemies  
trust thou never,  
although they speak thee fair:  
promise them good:  
'tis good to have another's injury  
as a warning.

20. So it befell  
Sörli the upright,  
when he placed himself in Vigolf's power;  
he confidently trusted him,  
his brother's murderer,  
but he proved false.

21. Peace to them he granted,  
with heart sincere;  
they in return promised him gold,  
feigned themselves friends.,

while they together drank;  
but then came forth their guile.

22. Then afterwards,  
on the second day,  
when they in Rýgiardal rode,  
they with swords wounded him  
who sackless was,  
and let his life go forth.

23. His corpse they dragged  
(on a lonely way,  
and cut up piecemeal) into a well,  
and would it hide;  
but the holy Lord  
beheld from heaven.

24. His soul summoned home  
the true God  
into his joy to come;  
but the evil doers  
will, I ween, late  
be from torments called.

\*\*\*\*\*

25. Do thou pray the Disir  
of the Lord's words  
to be kind to thee in spirit:  
for a week after,  
all shall then go happily,  
according to thy will.

26. For a deed of ire  
that thou has perpetrated,  
never atone with evil:  
the weeping thou shalt  
sooth with benefits:  
that is salutary to the soul.

27. On God a man  
shall for good things call,  
on him who has mankind created.

Greatly sinful is  
every man  
who late finds the Father.

28. To be solicited, we opine,  
is with all earnestness  
for that which is lacking:  
of all things may be destitute  
he who for nothing asks:  
few heed the wants of the silent.

29. Late I came,  
though called betimes,  
to the supreme Judge's door;  
thitherward I yearn;  
for it was promised me,  
he who craves it shall of the feast partake.

30. Sins are the cause  
that sorrowing we depart  
from this world:  
no one stands in dread,  
if he does no evil:  
good it is to be blameless.

31. Like unto wolves  
all those seem  
who have a faithless mind:  
so he will prove  
who has to go  
through ways strewed with gleeds.

32. Friendly counsels,  
and wisely composed, seven  
I have imparted to thee:  
consider thou them well,  
and forget them never:  
they are all useful to learn.

\*\*\*\*\*



33. Of that I will speak,  
how happy I was  
in the world,  
and secondly,  
how the sons of men  
reluctantly become corpses.

34. Pleasure and pride  
deceive the sons of men  
who after money crave;  
shining riches  
at last become a sorrow:  
many have riches driven to madness.

35. Steeped in joys  
I seemed to men;  
for little did I see before me:  
our worldly sojourn  
has the Lord created  
in delights abounding.

36. Bowed down I sat,  
long I tottered,  
of life was most desirous;  
but He prevailed  
who was all-powerful:  
onward are the ways of the doomed.

37. The cords of Hel  
were tightly  
bound round my sides;  
I would rend them,  
but they were strong.  
'Tis easy free to go.

38. I alone knew,  
how on all sides  
my pains increased.  
The maids of Hel each eve  
with horror bade me  
to their home.

39. The sun I saw,  
true star of day,  
sink in its roaring home;  
but Hel's grated doors  
on the other side I heard  
heavily creaking.

40. The sun I saw  
with blood-red beams beset:  
(fast was I then from this world declining)  
mightier she appeared,  
in many ways  
than she was before.

41. The sun I saw,  
and it seemed to me  
as if I saw a glorious god:  
I bowed before her,  
for the last time,  
in the world of men.

42. The sun I saw:  
she beamed forth so  
that I seemed nothing to know;  
but Giöll's streams  
roared from the other side  
mingled much with blood.

43. The sun I saw,  
with quivering eyes,  
appalled and shrinking;  
for my heart  
in great measure was  
dissolved in languor.

44. The sun I saw  
seldom sadder;  
I had then almost from the world declined:  
my tongue was  
as wood become,  
and all was cold without me.

45. The sun I saw  
never after,  
since that gloomy day;  
for the mountain-waters  
closed over me,  
and I went called from torments.

46. The star of hope,  
when I was born,  
fled from my breast away;  
high it flew,  
settled nowhere,  
so that it might find rest.

47. Longer than all  
was that one night,  
when stiff on my straw I lay;  
then becomes manifest  
the divine word:  
“Man is the same as earth.”

48. The Creator God can  
it estimate and know,  
(He who made heaven and earth)  
how forsaken  
many go hence,  
although from kindred parted.

49. Of his works  
each has the reward:  
happy is he who does good.  
Of my wealth bereft,  
to me was destined  
a bed strewn with sand.

50. Bodily desires  
men oftentimes seduce,  
of them has many a one too much:  
water of baths  
was of all things to me  
most loathsome.

51. In the Norns' seat  
 nine days I sat,  
 thence I was mounted on a horse:  
 there the giantess's sun  
 shone grimly  
 through the dripping clouds of heaven.

52. Without and within,  
 I seemed to traverse all  
 the seven nether worlds:  
 up and down,  
 I sought an easier way,  
 where I might have the readiest paths.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

53. Of that is to be told,  
 which I first saw,  
 when I to the worlds of torment came:-  
 scorched birds,  
 which were souls,  
 flew numerous as flies.

54. From the west I saw  
 Von's dragons fly,  
 and Glæval's paths obscure:  
 their wings they shook;  
 wide around me seemed  
 the earth and heaven to burst.

55. The sun's hart I saw  
 from the south coming,  
 he was by two together led:  
 his feet stood on the earth,  
 but his horns  
 reached up to heaven.

56. From the north riding I saw  
 the sons of Nidi,  
 they were seven in all:  
 from full horns,  
 the pure mead they drank  
 from the heaven-god's well.

57. The wind was silent,  
the waters stopped their course;  
then I heard a doleful sound:  
for their husbands  
false-faced women  
ground earth for food.

58. Gory stones  
those dark women  
turned sorrowfully;  
bleeding hearts hung  
out of their breasts,  
faint with much affliction.

59. Many a man I saw  
wounded go  
on those gleed-strewed paths;  
their faces seemed  
to me all reddened  
with reeking blood.

60. Many men I saw  
to earth gone down,  
who holy service might not have;  
heathen stars  
stood above their heads,  
painted with deadly characters.

61. I saw those men  
who much envy harbour  
at another's fortune;  
bloody runes  
were on their breasts  
graved painfully.

62. I there saw men  
many not joyful;  
they were all wandering wild:  
this he earns,  
who by this world's vices  
is infatuated.

63. I saw those men  
 who had in various ways  
 acquired other's property:  
 in shoals they went  
 to Castle-covetous,  
 and burthens bore of lead.

64. I saw those men  
 who many had  
 of life and property bereft:  
 through the breasts  
 of those men passed  
 strong venomous serpents.

65. I saw those men  
 who the holy days  
 would not observe:  
 their hands were  
 on hot stones  
 firmly nailed.

66. I saw those men  
 who from pride  
 valued themselves too highly;  
 their garments  
 ludicrously were  
 in fire enveloped.

67. I saw those men  
 who had many  
 false words of others uttered:  
 Hel's ravens  
 from their heads  
 their eyes miserably tore.

68. All the horrors  
 thou wilt not get to know  
 which Hel's inmates suffer.  
 Pleasant sins  
 end in painful penalties:  
 pains ever follow pleasure.

\*\*\*\*\*

69. I saw those men  
who had much given  
for God's laws;  
pure lights were  
above their heads  
brightly burning.

70. I saw those men  
who from exalted mind  
helped the poor to aid:  
angels read  
holy books  
above their heads.

71. I saw those men  
who with much fasting had  
their bodies wasted:  
God's angels  
bowed before them:  
that is the highest joy.

72. I saw those men  
who had put food  
into their mothers' mouth:  
their couches were  
on the rays of heaven  
pleasantly placed.

73. Holy virgins  
had cleanly washed  
the souls from sin  
of those men,  
who for a long time had  
themselves tormented.

74. Lofty cars I saw  
towards heaven going;  
they were on the way to God:  
men guided them  
who had been murdered  
wholly without crime.

75. Almighty Father!  
 greatest Son!  
 holy Spirit of heaven!  
 Thee I pray,  
 who hast us all created;  
 free us all from miseries.

\*\*\*\*\*

76. Biugvör and Listvör  
 sit at Herðir's doors,  
 on resounding seat;  
 iron gore  
 falls from their nostrils,  
 which kindles hate among men.

77. Odin's wife  
 rows in earth's ship,  
 eager after pleasures;  
 her sails are  
 reefed late,  
 which on the ropes of desire are hung.

78. Son! I thy father  
 and Solkatla's sons  
 have alone obtained for thee  
 that horn of hart,  
 which from the grave-mound bore  
 the wise Vigdvalin.

79. Here are runes  
 which have engraven  
 Niörd's daughters nine,  
 Radvör the eldest,  
 and the youngest Kreppvör,  
 and their seven sisters.

80. How much violence  
 have they perpetrated  
 Svaf and Svaflogi!  
 bloodshed they have excited,  
 and wounds have sucked,  
 after an evil custom.



81. This lay,  
which I have taught thee,  
thou shalt before the living sing,  
the Sun-Song,  
which will appear  
in many parts no fiction.

82. Here we part,  
but again shall meet  
on the day of men's rejoicing.  
Oh Lord!  
unto the dead grant peace,  
and to the living comfort.

83. Wondrous lore  
has in dream to thee been sung,  
but thou hast seen the truth:  
no man has been  
so wise created  
that has before heard the Sun-Song.



## Part 2: The Heroic Lays

### Preface

In the preface to the first or mythological part of this translation of *Sæmund's Edda*, I announced my intention of publishing the second or heroic portion, should that first part be not unfavourably received. That condition has been fulfilled, for not only has its reception here been favourable, but in the United States of America it has been noticed in terms highly gratifying to the translator. I now therefore do not hesitate to publish the second part.

The limits within which I deem it necessary to confine myself, from my desire to produce a small work at a moderate cost, admit only of a very brief notice of the poems contained in this portion of the Edda: *The Lay of Völund (Völundarkvida)* celebrates the story of Völund's doing and sufferings during his sojourn in the territory of the Swedish king Nidud. (*Ger.* Wieland, *Fr.* Veland and Galans) is the Scandinavian and Germanic Vulcan (Hephaistos) and Dædalus. In England his story, as a skillful smith, is traceable to a very early period. In the Anglo-Saxon poem of Beowulf we find that hero desiring, in the event of his falling in conflict with Grendel, that his corslet may be sent to Hygelac, being, as he says, the work of Weland: and king Ælfred, in his translation of *Boethius de Consolatione*, renders the words *fidelis ossa Fabricii*, etc. by Hwæt (*hwær*) *sint nu Bæs foremæran* and *Bæs wisan goldsmiðes ban Welondes?* (Where are now the bones of the famous and wise goldsmith Weland?), evidently taking the proper name of Fabricius for an appellative equivalent to faber. In the *Exeter Book*, too, there is a poem in substance closely resembling the Eddaic lay. In his novel of *Kenilworth*, Walter Scott has been guilty of a woeful perversion of the old tradition, travestied from the Berkshire legend of Wayland Smith. As a land-boundary we find Weland's smithy in a charter of king Eadred a.d. 955. Ampler details concerning Weland are to be found in Mr. Price's preface to *Warton's History of English Poetry* 8vo., edit.; Müller, *Sagabibliothek*, II. pp. 157 sqq.; Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, pp. 349 sqq. edit. 1844; Müller, *Aldeutsche Religion*, p. 311. Much interesting matter will also be found in Weber and Jamieson's *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*. Bishop Müller, derives the name from O. Nor. Vél, thinking that it is only according to the Norse pronunciation that it has a signification, viz. art, wile, guile, and *lundr*, mind, disposition, and is thence inclined to assign a Northern origin to the story. But may not the form Völundr be merely a Northern adaptation of the German Wieland or Anglo-Saxon Weland? On the *Lay of Helgi Hiörvard's Son* there is nothing to remark beyond what appears in the poem itself.

The *Lays of Helgi Hundingcide* form the first of the series of stories relating to the Völsung race, and the Giukungs, or Niflungs.

The connection of the several personages celebrated in these poems will appear plain from the following tables.



seem, and justly so, incomplete without it.

Had the limits, within which I am desirous to confine my humble attempt at a version of the *Poetic Edda*, permitted, I would have assigned a portion of this preface to some notice of the relation between the Northern poems relating to the Völsungs and Giukungs, or Niflungs, and the same subject as it appears in the *Nibelunge Not*; but as the latter is familiar to many readers and accessible to all, in the original old German, in modern German, and in more than one excellent English version, I omit all further mention of the subject.

In compliance with the expressed wish of the Publishers, I subscribe my name as the translator of *Sæmund's Edda*.

**Benjamin Thorpe**



## Völundarkviða: The Lay of Völund

There was a king in Sweden named Nidud: he had two sons and a daughter, whose name was Bödvild. There were three brothers, sons of a king of the Finns, one was called Slagfid, the second Egil, the third Völund. They went on snow-shoes and hunted wild-beasts. They came to Ulfdal, and there made themselves a house, where there is a water called Ulfsjár. Early one morning they found on the border of the lake three females sitting and spinning flax. Near them lay their swan-plumages: they were Valkyriur. Two of them, Hladgud-Svanhvit and Hervör-Alvit, were daughters of King Hlödver; the third was Ölrún, a daughter of Kiár of Valland. They took them home with them to their dwelling. Egil had Ölrún, Slagfid Svanhvit, and Völund Alvit. They lived there seven years, when they flew away seeking conflicts, and did not return. Egil then went on snow-shoes in search of Ölrún, and Slagfid in search of Svanhvit, but Völund remained in Ulfdal. He was a most skilful man, as we learn from old traditions. King Nidud ordered him to be seized, so as it is here related.

1. Maids flew from the south,  
through the murky wood,  
Alvit the young,  
fate to fulfil.

2. One of them,  
of maidens fairest,  
to his comely breast  
Egil clasped.  
Svanhvit was the second,  
she a swan's plumage bore;  
but the third,  
their sister,  
the white neck clasped  
of Völund.

3. There they stayed  
seven winters through;  
but all the eighth  
were with longing seized;  
and in the ninth  
fate parted them.  
The maidens yearned  
for the murky wood,  
the young Alvit,  
fate to fulfil.

4. From the chase came  
the ardent hunters,  
Slagfid and Egil,  
found their house deserted,  
went out and in,  
and looked around.  
Egil went east  
after Ölrún,  
and Slagfid west  
after Svanhvit;

5. But Völund alone  
remained in Ulfdal.  
He the red gold set  
with the hard gem,  
well fastened all the rings  
on linden bast,  
and so awaited  
his bright consort,  
if to him  
she would return.

6. It was told to Nidud,  
the Niarars' lord,  
that Völund alone  
remained in Ulfdal.  
In the night went men,  
in studded corslets,  
their shields glistened  
in the waning moon.

7. From their saddles they alighted  
at the house's gable,  
thence went in  
through the house.  
On the bast they saw  
the rings all drawn,  
seven hundred,  
which the warrior owned.



8. And they took them off,  
 and they put them on,  
 all save one,  
 which they bore away.  
 Came then from the chase  
 the ardent hunter,  
 Völund, gliding<sup>1</sup>  
 on the long way.

9. To the fire he went,  
 bear's flesh to roast.  
 Soon blazed the brushwood,  
 and the arid fir,  
 the wind-dried wood,  
 before Völund.

10. On the bearskin sat,  
 his rings counted,  
 the Alfar's companion:  
 one was missing.  
 He thought that Hlödver's  
 daughter had it,  
 the young Alvit,  
 and that she was returned.

11. So long he sat  
 until he slept;  
 and he awoke  
 of joy bereft:  
 on his hands he felt  
 heavy constraints,  
 and round his feet  
 fetters clasped.

12. "Who are the men  
 that on the rings' possessor  
 have laid bonds?  
 and me have bound?"

1. On snow-shoes.

13. Then cried Nidud,  
 the Niarars' lord:  
 "Whence gottest thou, Völund!  
 Alfars' chief!<sup>2</sup>  
 our gold,  
 in Ulfdal?"

14. "No gold was here  
 in Grani's path,  
 far I thought our land  
 from the hills of Rhine.  
 I mind me that we more  
 treasures possessed,  
 when, a whole family,  
 we were at home.

15. Hladgud and Hervör  
 were of Hlödver born;  
 know was Ölrún,  
 Kiar's daughter,  
 she entered  
 into the house,  
 stood on the floor,  
 her voice moderated:  
 "Now is he not mirthful,  
 who from the forest comes."

King Nidud gave to his daughter Bödvild the ring which had been taken from the bast in Völund's house; but he himself bore the sword that had belonged to Völund. The queen said:

16. His teeth he shows,  
 when the sword he sees,  
 and Bödvild's ring  
 he recognizes:  
 threatening are his eyes  
 as a glistening serpent's:  
 let be severed  
 his sinews' strength;

2. The designation of Alfars' chief, or prince, applied to Volund, who, as we learn from the prose introduction, was a son of a king of the Finns, may perhaps be accounted for by the circumstance that the poem itself hardly belongs to the Odinic Mythology, and was probably composed when that system was in its decline and giving place to the heroic or romantic.

and set him then  
in Sævarstad.

This was done; he was hamstrung and then set on a certain small island near the shore, called Sævarstad. He there forged for the king all kinds of jewelry work. No one was allowed to go to him, except the king. Völund said:

17. “The sword shines  
in Nidud’s belt,  
which I whetted  
as I could most skillfully,  
and tempered,  
as seemed to me most cunningly.  
That bright blade for ever is  
taken from me:  
never shall I see it  
borne into Völund’s smithy.

18. Now Bödvild wears  
my consort’s  
red-gold rings:  
for this I have no indemnity.”  
He sat and never slept,  
and his hammer plied;  
but much more speedy vengeance  
devised on Nidud.

19. The two young sons  
of Nidud ran  
in at the door to look,  
in Sævarstad.  
To the chest they came,  
for the keys asked;  
manifest was their grudge,  
when therein they looked.

20. Many necklaces were there,  
which to those youths appeared  
of the red gold to be,  
and treasures.  
“Come ye two alone,  
to-morrow come;

that gold shall  
be given to you.

21. Tell it not to the maidens,  
nor to the household folk,  
nor to any one,  
that ye have been with me.”  
Early called  
one the other,  
brother, brother:  
“Let us go see the rings.”

22. To the chest they came,  
for the keys asked;  
manifest was their grudge,  
when therein they looked.  
Of those children he  
the heads cut off,  
and under the prison's mixen  
laid their bodies.

23. But their skulls  
beneath the hair  
he in silver set,  
and to Nidud gave;  
and of their eyes  
precious stones he formed,  
which to Nidud's  
wily wife he sent.

24. But of the teeth  
of the two  
breast-ornaments he made,  
and to Bödvild sent.  
Then did Bödvild  
praise the ring:  
to Völund brought it,  
when she had broken it:  
“I dare to no one tell it,  
save alone to thee.”

Völund

25. "I will so repair  
the fractured gold,  
that to thy father  
it shall fairer seem,  
and to thy mother  
much more beautiful,  
and to thyself,  
in the same degree."

26. He then brought her beer,  
that he might succeed the better,  
as on her seat  
she fell asleep.  
"Now have I  
my wrongs avenged,  
all save one  
in the wood perpetrated."<sup>3</sup>

27. "I wish," said Völund,  
"that on my feet I were,  
of the use of which  
Nidud's men have deprived me."  
Laughing Völund  
rose in the air:  
Bödvild weeping  
from the isle departed.  
She mourned her lover's absence,  
and for her father's wrath.

28. Stood without  
Nidud's wily wife;  
then she went in  
through the hall;  
but he on the enclosure  
sat down to rest.  
"Art thou awake  
Niarars' lord!"

3. The translation of this line is founded solely on a conjectural emendation of the text. The wrong alluded to may be the hamstringing.

29. "Ever am I awake,  
joyless I lie to rest,  
when I call to mind  
my children's death:  
my head is chilled,  
cold are to me thy counsels.  
Now with Völund  
I desire to speak."

30. "Tell me, Völund,  
Alfars' chief!  
of my brave boys  
what is become?"

31. "Oaths shalt thou  
first to me swear,  
by board of ship,  
by rim of shield,  
by shoulder of steed,  
by edge of sword,  
that thou wilt not slay  
the wife of Völund,  
nor of my bride  
cause the death;  
although a wife I have  
whom ye know,  
or offspring  
within thy court.

32. To the smithy go,  
which thou has made,  
there wilt thou the bellows find  
with blood besprinkled.  
The heads I severed  
of thy boys,  
and under the prison's mixen  
laid their bodies.

33. But their skulls  
beneath the hair  
I in silver set,  
and to Nidud gave;  
and of their eyes  
precious stones I formed,  
which to Nidud's  
wily wife I sent.

34. Of the teeth  
of the two,  
breast-ornaments I made,  
and to Bödvild sent.  
Now Bödvild goes  
big with child,  
the only daughter  
of you both."

35. "Word didst thou never speak  
that more afflicted me,  
or for which I would  
more severely punish thee.  
There is no man so tall  
that he from thy horse can take thee,  
or so skilful  
that he can shoot thee down,  
thence where thou floatest  
up in the sky."

36. Laughing Völund  
rose in air,  
but Nidud sad  
remained sitting.

37. "Rise up Thakrád,  
my best of thralls!  
bid Bödvild,  
my fair-browed daughter,  
in bright attire come,  
with her sire to speak.

38. Is it, Bödvild! true  
what has been told to me,  
that thou and Völund  
in the isle together sat?”

39. “True it is, Nidud!  
what has been told to thee,  
that Völund and I  
in the isle together sat,  
in an unlucky hour:  
would it had never been!  
I could not  
against him strive,  
I might not  
against him prevail.”



# Helgakviða Hiörvarðs Sonar

## The Lay of Helgi Hiörvard's son

There was a king named Hiörvard, who had four wives, one of whom was named Alfhild, their son was named Hedin; the second was named Særeid, their son was Humlung; the third was named Sinriód, their son was Hymling. King Hiörvard made a vow that he would have to wife the most beautiful woman he knew of, and was told that King Svafnir had a daughter of incomparable beauty, named Sigrlinn. He had a jarl named Idmund, whose son Atli was sent to demand the hand of Sigrlinn for the king. He stayed throughout the winter with King Svafnir. There was a jarl there named Franmar, who was the foster-father of Sigrlinn, and had a daughter named Alöf. This jarl advised that the maiden should be refused, and Atli returned home. One day when the jarl's son Atli was standing in a grove, there was a bird sitting in the boughs above him, which had heard that his men called the wives which King Hiörvard had the most beautiful. The bird talked, and Atli listened to what it said. The bird said:

1. Hast thou seen Sigrlinn,  
Svafnir's daughter,  
of maidens fairest,  
in her pleasant home?  
though fair  
the wives of Hiörvard  
seem to men  
in Glasis-lund.

Atli  
2. With Atli,  
Idmund's son,  
sagacious bird!  
wilt thou further speak?

Bird  
I will if the prince  
will offer to me,  
and I may choose what I will  
from the king's court.

Atli

3. Choose not Hiörvard  
nor his sons,  
nor the fair  
daughters of that prince,  
nor the wives  
which the king has.  
Let us together bargain;  
that is the part of friends.

Bird

4. A fane I will chose,  
offer-steads many,  
gold-horned cows  
from the chief's land,  
if Sigrlinn  
sleep in his arms,  
and unconstrained  
with that prince shall live.

This took place before Atli's journey; but after his return, when the king asked his tidings, he said:

5. Labor we have had,  
but errand none performed;  
our horses failed us  
in the vast fell;  
we had afterwards  
a swampy lake to ford;  
then was denied us  
Svafnir's daughter  
with rings adorned,  
whom we would obtain.

The king commanded them to go a second time, and also went himself. But when they had ascended a fell, and saw in Svavaland the country on fire, and a great reek from the horses of cavalry, the king rode down the fell into the country, and took up his night-quarters by a river. Atli kept watch, and crossed the river, and came to a house, on which sat a great bird to guard it, but was asleep. Atli shot the bird dead with an arrow. In the house he found the king's daughter Sigrlinn, and Alöf daughter of Franmar, and brought them both away with him. The jarl Franmar had taken the form of an eagle, and protected them from a hostile army by sorcery. There was a king named Hrodmar, a wooer of Sigrlinn: he had slain the king of Svavaland, and ravaged and burnt the country. Hiörvard obtained Sigrlinn, and Atli Alöf. Hiörvard and Sigrlinn had a son tall and comely: he was taciturn and had no fixed name. As he was sitting on a mound he saw nine Valkyriur, one of whom was of

most noble aspect. She said:

6. Late wilt thou, Helgi!  
rings possess,  
a potent warrior,  
or Rödulsvellir,  
so at morn the eagle sang  
if thou art ever silent;  
although thou, prince!  
a fierce mood mayest show.

Helgi  
7. What wilt thou let accompany  
the name of Helgi,  
maid of aspect bright!  
since that thou art please to give me?  
Think well over  
what thou art saying.  
I will not accept it,  
unless I have thee also.

Valkyria  
8. Swords I know lying  
in Sigarsholm,  
fewer by four  
than five times ten:  
one of them is  
of all the best,  
of shields the bale,  
with gold adorned.

9. A ring is on the hilt,  
courage in the midst,  
in the point terror  
for his use who owns it:  
along the edge  
a blood-stained serpent lies,  
and on the guard  
the serpent casts its tail.

There was a king named Eylimi; Svava was his daughter; she was a Valkyria and rode through air and water. It was she who gave Helgi that name, and afterwards often protected him in battle. Helgi said:

10. Hiörvard! thou art not  
 a king of wholesome counsel,  
 leader of people!  
 renowned though thou mayest be.  
 Thou has let fire devour  
 the homes of princes,  
 though harm to thee  
 they none have done.

11. But Hródmar shall  
 of the rings dispose,  
 which our relations  
 have possessed.  
 That chief recks little  
 of his life;  
 he thinks only to obtain  
 the heritage of the dead.

Hiörvard answers, that he will supply Helgi with an army, if he will avenge his mother's father. Helgi thereupon seeks the sword that Svava had indicated to him. Afterwards he and Atli went and slew Hrodmar, and performed many deeds of valor. He killed the Jötun Hati, as he sat on a crag. Helgi and Atli lay with their ships in Hatafiörd. Atli kept watch in the first part of the night. Hrimgerd, Hati's daughter, said:

12. Who are the chieftains  
 in Hatafiörd?  
 With shields are  
 your ships bedecked;  
 boldly ye bear yourselves,  
 few things ye fear, I ween:  
 tell me how  
 your king is named.

Atli  
 13. Helgi is his name;  
 but thou nowhere canst  
 to the chief do harm;  
 iron forts are  
 around the prince's fleet;  
 giantesses may not assail us.

Hrimgerd

14. How art thou named?  
most powerful champion!  
How do men call thee?  
Thy king confides in thee,  
since in the ship's fair prow  
he grants thee place.

Atli

15. Atli I am named,  
fierce I shall prove to thee;  
towards giantesses I am most hostile.  
The humid prow  
I have oft occupied,  
and the night-riders slain.

16. How art thou called?  
corpse-greedy gigantess!  
hag! name thy father.  
Nine rasts shouldst thou  
be underground,  
and a forest grow on thy breast.

Hrímgerd

17. Hrímgerd I am called,  
Hati was my father called,  
whom I knew the mightiest Jötun.  
He many women had  
from their dwellings taken,  
until him Helgi slew.

Atli

18. Thou wast, hag!  
before the prince's ships,  
and layest before them in the fiörd's mouth.  
The chieftain's warriors  
thou wouldst to Rán consign,  
had a bar not crossed thee.

Hrimgerd

19. Now, Atli! thou art wrong,  
methinks thou art dreaming;  
thy brows thou lettest over thy eyelids fall.  
My mother lay  
before the prince's ships;  
I Hlödvard's sons drowned in the ocean.

20. Thou wouldst neigh, Atli!  
if thou wert not a gelding.  
See! Hrímgærd cocks her tail.  
Thy heart, methinks, Atli!  
is in thy hinder part,  
although thy voice is clear.

Atli

21. I think I shall the stronger prove,  
if thou desirest to try;  
and I can step from the port to land.  
Thou shalt be soundly cudged,  
if I heartily begin,  
and let thy tail fall, Hrímgærd!

Hrimgerd

22. Just come on shore, Atli!  
if in thy strength thou trustest,  
and let us meet in Varinsvik.  
A rib-roasting  
thou shalt get, brave boy!  
if in my claws thou comest.

Atli

23. I will not come  
before the men awake,  
and o'er the king hold watch.  
It would not surprise me,  
if from beneath our ship  
some hag arose.

Hrimgerd

24. Keep watch, Atli!  
and to Hrimgerd pay the blood-fine  
for Hati's death.  
If one night she may  
sleep with the prince,  
she for the slain will be indemnified.

Helgi

25. Lodin is named he who shall thee possess,  
thou to mankind art loathsome.  
In Tholley dwells that Thurs,  
that dog-wise Jötun,  
of all rock-dwellers the worst:  
he is a fitting man for thee.

Hrimgerd

26. Helgi would rather have  
her who last night  
guarded the port and men,  
the gold-bright maiden.  
She methought had strength,  
she stept from port to land,  
and so secured your fleet.  
She was alone the cause  
that I could not  
the king's men slay.

Helgi

27. Hear now, Hrimgerd!  
If I may indemnify thee,  
say fully to the king:  
was it one being only,  
that saved the prince's ships,  
or went many together?

Hrimgerd

28. Three troops of maidens;  
though one maid foremost rode,  
bright, with helmed head.  
Their horses shook themselves,  
and from their manes there sprang

dew into the deep dales,  
 hail on the lofty trees,  
 whence comes fruitfulness to man.  
 To me all that I saw was hateful.

Atli  
 29. Look eastward now, Hrimgerd!  
 whether Helgi has not stricken thee  
 with death-bearing words.  
 By land and water  
 the king's fleet is safe,  
 and the chief's men also.

30. It is now day, Hrimgerd!  
 and Atli has the detained  
 to thy loss of life.  
 A ludicrous haven-mark  
 'twill, indeed, be,  
 where thou a stone-image standest.

King Helgi was a renowned warrior. He came to King Eylimi and demanded his daughter Svava. Helgi and Svava were united, and loved each other ardently. Svava remained at home with her father, but Helgi was engaged in warfare. Svava was a Valkyria as before. Hedin was at home with his father, King Hiörvard in Norway. Returning home alone from the forest on a Yule-eve, Hedin met a troll-wife riding on a wolf, with serpents for reins, who offered to attend him, but he declined her offer; whereupon she said: "Thou shalt pay for this at the Bragi-cup."<sup>1</sup> In the evening solemn vows were made, and the *són*-hog was led forth, on which the guests laid their hands, and then made solemn vows at the Bragi-cup. Hedin bound himself by a vow to possess Svava, the beloved of his brother Helgi; but repented it so bitterly that he left home and wandered through wild paths to the southern lands, and there found his brother Helgi. Helgi said:

31. Welcome art thou, Hedin!  
 What new tidings  
 canst thou give  
 from Norway?

1. At guilds the Bragi-cup (*Bragafull*) was drunk. It was the custom at the funeral feast of kings and jarls, that the heir should sit on a lower seat, until the Bragafull was brought in, that he should then rise to receive it, make a vow, and drink the contents of the cup (*full*). He was then led to his father's high seat. At an offering guild, the chief signed with the figure of Thor's hammer both the cup and the meat. First was drunk Odin's cup, for victory and power to the king; then Niord's cup, and Frey's for a good year and peace; after which it was the customer with many to drink a Bragafull. The peculiarity of this cup was, that it was a cup of vows, that on drinking it a vow was made to perform some great and arduous deed, that might be made a subject for the song of the skald.



Why art thou, prince!  
 from the land driven,  
 and alone art come  
 to find us?

Hedin  
 32. Of a much greater crime  
 I am guilty.  
 I have chosen  
 a royal daughter,  
 thy bride,  
 at the Bragi-cup.

Helgi  
 33. Accuse not thyself;  
 true will prove  
 words at drinking uttered  
 by us both.  
 Me a chieftain has  
 to the strand summoned;  
 within three nights  
 I must be there.  
 'Tis to me doubtful  
 whether I return;  
 then may well such befall,  
 is it so must be.

Hedin  
 34. Thou saidst, Helgi!  
 that Hedin well  
 deserved of thee,  
 and great gifts:  
 It would beseem thee better  
 thy sword to redden,  
 than to grant  
 peace to thy foes.

Helgi so spoke, for he had a foreboding that his death was at hand, and that his fylgiur (attendant spirit) had accosted Hedin, when he saw the woman riding on a wolf. There was a king named Alf, a son of Hrodmar, who had appointed a place of combat with Helgi in Sigar's plain within three days. Then said Helgi:

35. On a wolf rode,  
 at evening twilight,  
 a woman who him  
 offered to attend.  
 She well knew,  
 that the son of Sigrlinn  
 would be slain,  
 on Sigar's plain.

There was a great conflict, in which Helgi got his death-wound.

36. Helgi sent  
 Sigar riding,  
 after Eylimi's  
 only daughter:  
 he bade her quickly  
 be in readiness,  
 if she would find  
 the king alive.

Sigar  
 37. Helgi has me  
 hither sent,  
 with thee, Svava!  
 thyself to speak.  
 Thee, said the king,  
 he fain would see,  
 ere the noble-born  
 breathes forth his last.

Svava  
 38. What has befallen Helgi,  
 Hiörvard's son?  
 I am sorely  
 by afflictions stricken.  
 Has the sea him deluded,  
 or the sword wounded?  
 On that man I will  
 harm inflict.

Sigar

39. This morning fell,  
at Frekastein,  
the king who beneath the sun  
was of all the best.  
Alf has  
complete victory,  
though this time  
it should not have been!

Helgi

40. Hail to thee, Svava!  
Thy love thou must divide;  
this in this world, methinks,  
is our last meeting.  
They say the chieftain's  
wounds are bleeding.  
The sword came  
too near my heart.

41. I pray thee, Svava!  
weep not, my wife!  
if thou wilt  
my voice obey  
that for Hedin thou  
a couch prepare,  
and the young prince  
in thy arms clasp.

Svava

42. I had said,  
in our pleasant home,  
when for me Helgi  
rings selected,  
that I would not gladly,  
after my king's departure,  
an unknown prince  
clasp in my arms.

Hedin  
43. Kiss me, Svava!  
I will not return,  
Rógheim to behold,  
nor Rödulsfiöll,  
before I have avenged  
Hiörvard's son,  
who was of kings  
under the sun the best.

Helgi and Svava were, it is said, born again.

# Helgakviða Hundingsbana Fyrri

## The First Lay of Helgi Hundingside

1. It was in the times of yore,  
when the eagles screamed,  
holy waters fell  
from the heavenly hills;  
then to Helgi,  
the great of soul,  
Borghild gave birth  
in Brálund.

2. In the mansion it was night:  
the Norns came,  
who should the prince's  
life determine.  
They him decreed  
a prince most famed to be,  
and of leaders  
accounted best.

3. With all their might they span  
the fatal threads,  
when that (he) burghs should overthrow<sup>1</sup>  
in Brálund.  
They stretched out  
the golden cord,  
and beneath the middle  
of the moon's mansion fixed it.

4. East and west  
they hid the ends,  
where the prince had  
lands between;  
towards the north  
Neri's sister  
cast a chain,  
which she bade last for ever.

1. That is, when they came to spin that period of his destiny.

5. One thing disquieted  
 the Ylfing's offspring,  
 and the woman  
 who had the child brought forth.  
 Sitting on a lofty tree,  
 on prey intent,  
 a raven to a raven said:  
 "I know something.

6. Stands cased in mail  
 Sigmund's son,  
 one day old:  
 now is our day come.  
 His eyes are piercing  
 as a warrior's;  
 a wolf's friend is he:  
 we shall rejoice!"

7. He to the folk appeared  
 a noble chief to be;  
 among men 'twas said  
 that happy times were come;  
 went the king himself  
 from the din of war,  
 noble garlic to bring  
 to the young prince;

8. Gave him the name of Helgi,  
 and Hringstadir,  
 Sólfjöll, Snæfjöll,  
 and Sigarsvellir,  
 Hringstád, Hátún,  
 and Himinvangar,  
 a sword ornate,  
 to Sinfjólta's brother.

9. Then grew up,  
in his friends' bosom,  
the high-born youth,  
in joyous splendor.  
He paid and gave  
gold for deserts;  
nor spared the chief  
the blood-stained sword.

10. A short time only the leader let  
warfare cease.  
When the prince was  
fifteen winters old,  
he caused the fierce  
Hunding to fall,  
who long had ruled  
over lands and people.

11. The sons of Hunding  
afterwards demanded  
from Sigmund's son  
treasure and rings;  
because they had  
on the prince to avenge  
their great loss of wealth,  
and their father's death.

12. The prince would neither  
the blood-fine pay,  
nor for the slain  
indemnity would give.  
They might expect, he said,  
a terrific storm  
of grey arrows,  
and Odin's ire.

13. The warriors went  
to the trysting place of swords,  
which they had appointed  
at Logafiöll.  
Broken was Frodi's peace  
between the foes:  
Vidrir's hounds went  
about the isle  
slaughter-greedy.

14. The leader sat  
under the Arastein,  
after he had slain  
Alf and Eyiólf,  
Hiörvard and Hávard,  
sons of Hunding:  
he had destroyed all  
Geirmimir's race.

15. Then gleamed a ray  
from Logafiöll,  
and from that ray  
lightnings issued;  
then appeared,  
in the field of air,  
a helmed band  
of Valkyriur:  
their corslets were  
with blood besprinkled,  
and from their spears  
shone beams of light.

16. Forthwith inquired  
the chieftain bold,  
from the wolf-congress  
of the southern Disir,  
whether they would,  
with the warriors,  
that night go home? -  
then was a clash of arms!



17. One from her horse,  
 Högni's daughter,  
 stilled the crash of shields,  
 and to the leader said:  
 "We have, I ween,  
 other objects  
 than with princely warriors  
 to drink beer.

18. My father has  
 his daughter promised  
 to the fierce  
 son of Granmar;  
 but I have, Helgi!  
 Declared Hödbrodd,  
 the proud prince,  
 like to a cat's son.

19. That chief will come  
 in a few days,  
 unless thou him call  
 to a hostile meeting;  
 or the maiden take  
 from the prince."

Helgi

20. Fear thou not  
 Isung's slayer;  
 there shall be first a clash of foes,  
 unless I am dead.

21. Thence sent messengers  
 the potent prince  
 through air and over water,  
 succors to demand,  
 and abundance  
 of ocean's gleam  
 to men to offer,  
 and to their sons.

22. "Bid them speedily  
to the ships to go,  
and those from Brandey  
to hold them ready."  
There the king abode,  
until thither came  
warriors in hundreds  
from Hedinsey.

23. From the strands also,  
and from Stafnsnes,  
a naval force went out,  
with gold adorned.  
Helgi then of Hiörleif asked:  
"Hast thou mustered  
the valiant people?"

24. But the young king  
the other answered:  
"Slowly" said he "are counted  
from Trönuey  
the long-beaked ships,  
under the seafarers,  
which sail without  
in Öresund,

25. Twelve hundred  
faithful men;  
though in Hátún  
there is more than half  
of the king's host  
We are to war inured."

26. Then the steersman threw  
the ship's tents aside,  
that the princes'  
people might awake,  
and the noble chiefs  
the dawn might see;  
and the warriors  
hauled the sails  
up to the mast  
in Varinsfiörd.

27. There was a dash of oars,  
 and clash of iron,  
 shield against shield resounded;  
 the vikings rowed;  
 roaring went,  
 under the chieftains  
 the royal fleet  
 far from the land.

28. So might be heard,  
 when together came  
 the tempest's sister<sup>2</sup>  
 and the long keels,  
 as when rock and surge  
 on each other break.

29. Higher still bade Helgi  
 the deep sail be hauled.  
 No port gave shelter  
 to the crews;  
 when Ægir's  
 terrific daughter  
 the chieftains' vessels  
 would o'erwhelm.

30. But from above  
 Sigrún intrepid,  
 saved them  
 and their fleet also;  
 from the hand of Rán  
 powerfully was wrested  
 the royal ship  
 at Gnípalund.

31. At eve they halted  
 in Unavágar;  
 the splendid ships  
 might into port have floated,  
 but the crews,  
 from Svarinshaug,

2. Kolgu Systir. Kolgat was one of the daughters of Ægir and Ran; they were the waves.

in hostile mood,  
espied the host.

32. Then demanded  
the god-born Gudmund:  
“Who is the chieftain  
that commands the fleet,  
and that formidable force  
brings to our land?”

33. Sinfjötli said,  
slinging up on the yard  
a red-hued shield  
with golden rim;  
He at the strait kept watch,  
and able was to answer,  
and with nobles  
words exchanged

34. “Tell it at eve,  
when you feed your pigs,  
and your dogs  
lead to their food,  
that the Ylfings  
from the east are come,  
ready to fight  
at Gnípalund.

35. Hödbrodd will  
Helgi find  
in the fleet’s midst,  
a king hard to make flee,  
who has oft  
the eagles sated,  
while thou wast at the mills,  
kissing the thrall-wenches.

Gudmund

36. Little dost thou remember  
of ancient saws,  
when of the noble  
thou falsehoods utterest.  
Thou hast been eating  
wolves' dainties,  
and of thy brother  
wast the slayer;  
wounds hast thou often  
sucked with cold mouth;  
every where loathed,  
thou hast crawled in caverns.

Sinfiötli

37. Thou was a Vala-crone  
in Varinsey,  
cunning as a fox,  
a spreader of lies.  
Thou saidst thou no man  
wouldst ever marry,  
no corsleted warrior,  
save Sinfiötli.

38. A mischievous crone was thou,  
a giantess, a Valkyria,  
insolent, onstrous,  
in Alfater's hall.  
All the Einheriar  
fought with each other,  
deceitful woman!  
for thy sake.  
Nine wolves we begat  
in Sagunes;  
I alone was  
father of them all.

Gudmund

39. Father thou wast not  
of Fenriswolves,  
older than all,  
as far as I remember;  
since by Gnípalund,  
the Thurs-maidens  
thee emasculated  
upon Thorsnes.

40. Thou was Siggeir's stepson,  
at home under the benches layest,  
accustomed to the wolf's howl  
out in the forests:  
calamity of every kind  
came over thee,  
when thou didst lacerate  
thy brother's breast.  
Notorious thou mad'st thyself  
by thy atrocious works.

Sinfjötli

41. Thou was Grani's bride  
at Brávöllr,  
hadst a golden bit,  
ready for the course.  
Many a time have I  
ridden thee tired,  
hungry and saddled,  
through the fells, thou hag!

Gudmund

42. A graceless lad  
thou wast thought to be,  
when Gulnir's goats  
thou didst milk.  
Another time thou wast  
a giantess's daughter,  
a tattered wretch.  
Wilt thou a longer chat?

Sinfiöldi

43. I rather would  
at Frekastein  
the ravens cram  
with thy carcass,  
than thy dogs  
lead to their meat,  
or thy hogs feed.  
May the fiend deal with thee!

Helgi

44. “Much more seemly, Sinfiöldi!  
would it be for you both  
in battle to engage,  
and the eagles gladden,  
than with useless  
words to contend,  
however princes<sup>3</sup>  
may foster hate.

45. Not good to me appear  
Granmar’s sons,  
yet ‘tis right that princes  
should speak the truth:  
they have shown,  
at Móinsheimar,  
that they have courage  
to draw the sword.”

46. Rapidly they their horses  
made to run,  
Svipud and Svegiud,  
to Sólheimar,  
over dewy dales,  
dark mountain-sides;  
trembled the sea of mist,  
where the men went.

3. Literally *ring-breakers*, or *-dispensers*.

47. The king they met  
 at the burgh's gate,  
 to the prince announced  
 the hostile advent.  
 Without stood Hödbrodd  
 with helmet decked:  
 he the speed noticed  
 of his kinsmen.  
 "Why have ye Hníflúngs  
 such wrathful countenance?"

48. "Hither to the shore are come  
 rapid keels,  
 towering masts,  
 and long yards,  
 shields many,  
 and smooth-shaven oars,  
 a king's noble host,  
 joyous Ylfings.

49. Fifteen bands  
 are come to land;  
 but there are out at sea,  
 before Gnípulund,  
 seven thousand  
 blue-black ocean-beasts  
 with gold adorned;  
 there is by far  
 their greatest multitude.  
 Now will Helgi not  
 delay the conflict."

Hödbrodd  
 50. "Let a bridled steed  
 to the chief assembly run,  
 but Sporvitnir  
 to Sparinsheid;  
 Melnir and Mylnir  
 to Myrkvid;  
 let no man  
 stay behind  
 of those  
 who swords can brandish.



51. Summon to you Högni,  
 and the sons of Hring,  
 Atli and Yngvi,  
 Alf the old;  
 they will gladly  
 engage in conflict.  
 We will let the Völsungs  
 find resistance.”

52. It was a whirlwind,  
 when together came  
 the fallow<sup>4</sup> blades  
 at Frekastein:  
 ever was Helgi  
 Hundingsbani  
 foremost in the host,  
 where men together fought:  
 ardent for battle,  
 disdainful of flight;  
 the chieftain had  
 a valiant heart.

53. Then came a maid from heaven,  
 helmed, from above  
 the clash of arms increased  
 for the king’s protection.  
 Then said Sigrún  
 well skilled to fly  
 to the host of heroes  
 from Hugin’s grove<sup>5</sup>

54. “Unscathed shalt thou, prince!  
 possess thy people,  
 pillar of Yngvi’s race!  
 and life enjoy;  
 thou hast laid low  
 the slow of flight,  
 the chief who caused  
 the dread warrior’s death.

4. It would appear that their swords were of bronze.

5. Hugin’s grove. The raven’s grove, i.e., the battle-field, strewn with corpses, the raven’s food.

And thee, o king!  
well beseem both  
red-gold rings  
and a powerful maid:  
unscathed shalt thou, prince!  
both enjoy,  
Högni's daughter,  
and Hringstadir,  
victory and lands:  
then is conflict ended."

# Helgakviða Hundingsbana Önnur

## The Second Lay of Helgi Hundingcide

King Sigmund, son of Völsung, had to wife Borghild of Brálund. They named their son Helgi, after Helgi Hiörvard's son. Helgi was fostered by Hagal. There was a powerful king named Hunding, after whom the land was called Hundland. He was a great warrior, and had many sons, who were engaged in warfare. There was enmity, both open and concealed, between King Hunding and King Sigmund, and they slew each others kinsmen. King Sigmund and his kindred were called Völsungs, and Ylfings. Helgi went forth and secretly explored the court of King Hunding. Heming, Hunding's son, was at home. On departing Helgi met a herdsman, and said:

1. "Say thou to Heming,  
that Helgi bears in mind  
who the mailed warrior was,  
whom the men laid low,  
when the grey wolf  
ye had within,  
and King Hunding  
that it was Hamal."

Hamal was the son of Hagal. King Hunding sent men to Hagal in search of Helgi, and Helgi had no other way to save himself than by taking the clothes of a female slave and going to grind. They sought but did not find him. Then said Blind the Baleful:

2. Sharp are the eyes of Hagal's thrall-wench;  
of no churlish race is she  
who at the mill stands.  
The mill-stones are split,  
the receiver flies asunder.  
Now a hard fate has  
befallen the warrior,  
when a prince must  
barley grind:  
much more fitting  
to that hand  
is the falchion's hilt  
than a mill-handle.

Hagal answered and said: -

3. No wonder 'tis  
 that the receiver rattles,  
 when a royal damsel  
 the handle turns.  
 She hovered  
 hither than the clouds,  
 and, like the vikings,  
 dared to fight,  
 until Helgi  
 made her captive.  
 She is a sister of  
 Sigar and Högni;  
 therefore has fierce eyes  
 the Ylfing maid.  
 \*\*\*\*\*

Helgi escaped and went on board a ship of war. He slew King Hunding, and was afterwards named Helgi Hundingsbani. He lay with his force in Brunavágar, and carried on 'strand-högg'<sup>1</sup> and ate raw flesh. There was a king named Högni, whose daughter was Sigrún: she was a Valkyria, and rode through air and over the sea. She was Svava regenerated. Sigrún rode to Helgi, and said:

4. What men cause a ship  
 along the coasts to float?  
 where do ye warriors a home possess?  
 what await ye  
 in Brunavágar?  
 whither desire ye  
 to explore a way?

Helgi  
 5. Hamal causes a ship  
 along the coasts to float;  
 we have home  
 in Hlésey;  
 a fair wind we await  
 in Brunavágar;  
 eastward we desire  
 to explore a way.

1. Slaughtering and carrying off the cattle on the sea-shore.

Sigrún

6. Were, o prince!  
 hast thou wakened war,  
 or fed the birds  
 on conflict's sisters?<sup>2</sup>  
 Why is thy corslet  
 sprinkled with blood?  
 Why beneath the helm  
 eat ye raw flesh?

Helgi

7. It was the Ylfings' son's  
 last achievement,  
 if thou desirest to know  
 west of the ocean,  
 that I took bears  
 in Bragalund,  
 and the eagles' race  
 with our weapons sated.  
 Now, maiden! I have said  
 what the reasons were,  
 why at sea  
 we little cooked meat ate.

Sigrún

8. To a battle thou alludest.  
 Before Helgi has  
 King Hunding  
 been doomed to fall.  
 In conflict ye have engaged,  
 when your kindred ye avenged,  
 and stained with blood  
 the falchion's edge.

Helgi

9. Why dost thou suppose,  
 sagacious maiden!  
 that it was they,  
 who their kin avenged?  
 Many a warrior's

bold sons there are,  
and hostile  
to our kindred.

Sigrún  
10. I was not far,  
leader of people!  
eager, at many  
a chieftain's end:  
yet crafty I account  
Sigmund's son,  
when in val-runes<sup>3</sup>  
the slaughter he announces.

11. A while ago I saw thee  
commanding war-ships,  
when thou hadst station  
on the bloody prow,  
and the cold sea  
waves were playing.  
Now, prince! thou wilt  
from me conceal it,  
but Högni's daughter  
recognizes thee.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Granmar was the name of a powerful prince who dwelt at Svarinshaug. He had many sons: one was called Hödbrodd, the second Gudmund, the third Starkadr. Hödbrodd was at the assembly of kings, and there betrothed himself to Sigrún, the daughter of Högni. But when she was informed of it, she rode with the Valkyriur through the air and over the sea in quest of Helgi. Helgi was at Logaföll, warring against the sons of Hunding, where he slew Alf and Eyiólf, Hiörvard and Herward. Being over-fatigued with the conflict, he was sitting under the Arastein, where Sigrún found him, and running to him, threw her arms round his neck, and, kissing him, told him her errand so as it is related in the first *Völsungakviða*.

12. Sigrún sought  
the joyous prince,  
Helgi's hand  
she forthwith grasped,  
kissed and addressed  
the helm-decked king.

13. Then was the chieftain's mind  
to the lady turned.  
She declared that she had loved,  
with her whole heart,  
Sigmund's son,  
before she had seen him.

14. "To Hödbrodd I was  
in th' assembly betrothed,  
but I another  
prince would have:  
yet, chieftain! I foresee  
my kindred's wrath:  
I have my father's  
promise broken."

15. Högni's daughter spoke not  
at variance with her heart:  
she said that Helgi's  
affection she must possess.

Helgi  
16. Care thou not  
for Högni's wrath,  
nor for the evil  
mind of thy kin.  
Thou shalt, young maiden!  
live with me:  
of a good race thou art,  
as I perceive.

Helgi then collected a large fleet and proceeded to Frekastein, and at sea experienced a perilous storm. Lightnings came over them, and the flashes entered the ships. They saw that nine Valkyriur were riding in the air, and recognized Sigrún among them. The storm then abated and they reached land in safety. The sons of Granmar were sitting on a hill as the ships were sailing towards the land. Gudmund leapt on a horse, and rode to explore on the hill by the haven. The Völsung then lowered their sails, and Gudmund spoke as it is before written in the *Helgakvida*:

"Who is the leader  
that commands the fleet,  
and an appalling host  
leads to our land?"

This said Gudmund, Granmar's son.

17. Who is the warrior  
that commands the ships,  
and lets his golden banner  
wave o'er his prow?  
No peace seems to me  
in that ship's front;  
it casts a warlike glow  
around the vikings.

Sinfjötli, Sigmund's son, answered:

18. Here may Hödbrodd  
Helgi learn to know,  
the hard of fight,  
in the fleet's midst:  
he the possession  
hold of thy race;  
he the fishes' heritage  
has to him subjected.

Gudmund  
19. Therefore ought we first,  
at Frekastein,  
to settle together,  
and decide our quarrels!  
Hödbrod! 'tis time  
vengeance to take,  
if an inferior lot  
we long have borne.

Sinfjötli  
20. Rather shalt thou, Gudmund!  
tend goats,  
and steep mountain-tops  
shalt climb,  
have in thy hand  
a hazel staff,  
that will better please thee  
than judgments of the sword.



Gudmund rode home with intelligence of the hostile arrangement; whereupon the sons of Granmar collected a host, and many kings came thither. Among them were Högni, the father of Sigrún, with his sons Bragi and Dag. There was a great battle, and all the sons of Högni, and all their chiefs were slain, except Dag, who obtained peace, and swore oaths to the Völsungs. Sigrún, going among the slain, found Hödbrodd at the point of death. She said:

23. Not will Sigrún  
of Sefafiöll,  
King Hödbrodd!  
sink in thy arms:  
thy life is departed.  
Oft the axe's blade  
the head approaches  
of Granmar's sons.

She then met Helgi, and was overjoyed. He said:

24. Not to thee, all-wise maiden!  
are all things granted,  
though, I say, in somewhat  
are the Norns to blame.  
This morn have fallen  
at Frekastein  
Bragi and Högni:  
I was their slayer.

25. But at Styrkleifar  
King Starkadr,  
and at Hlebiörg  
the son of Hrollaug.  
That prince I saw  
of all most fierce,  
whose trunk yet fought  
when the head was far.

26. On the earth lie  
the greater number  
of thy kinsmen,  
to corpses turned.  
Thou hast not fought the battle,  
yet 'twas decreed,  
that thou, potent maiden!  
shouldst cause the strife.

Sigrún then wept. Helgi said:

27. Sigrún! console thyself;  
 a Hild thou hast been to us.  
 Kings cannot conquer fate:  
 gladly would I have them living  
 who are departed,  
 if I might clasp thee to my breast.

Helgi obtained Sigrún, and they had sons. Helgi lived not to be old. Dag, the son of Högni, sacrificed to Odin, for vengeance for his father. Odin lent Dag his spear. Dag met with his relation Helgi in a place called Fiöturlund, and pierced him through with his spear. Helgi fell there, but Dag rode to the mountains and told Sigrún what had taken place.

28. Loath am I, sister!  
 sad news to tell thee;  
 for unwillingly I have  
 my sister caused to weep.  
 This morning fell,  
 in Fiöturlund,  
 the prince who was  
 on earth the best,  
 and on the necks  
 of warriors stood.

Sigrún  
 29. Thee shall the oaths  
 all gnaw,  
 which to Helgi  
 thou didst swear,  
 the limped  
 Leiptr's water,  
 and at the cold dank  
 wave-washed rock.

30. May the ship not move forward,  
 which under thee should move,  
 although the wished-for wind  
 behind thee blow.  
 May the horse not run,  
 which under thee should run,  
 although from enemies  
 thou hast to flee!

31. May the sword not bite  
 which thou drawest,  
 unless it sing  
 round thy own head.  
 Then would Helgi's death  
 be on thee avenged,  
 if a wolf thou wert,  
 out in the woods,  
 of all good bereft,  
 and every joy,  
 have no sustenance,  
 unless on corpses thou shouldst spring.

Dag

32. Sister! thou ravest,  
 and hast lost thy wits,  
 when on thy brother thou  
 callest down such miseries.  
 Odin alone is cause  
 of all the evil;  
 for between relatives  
 he brought the runes of strife.

33. Thy brother offers thee  
 rings of red gold,  
 all Vadilsvé  
 and Vigdalir:  
 have half the land,  
 thy grief to compensate,  
 woman ring-adorned!  
 thou and thy sons.

Sigrún

34. So happy I shall not sit  
 at Sefafiöll,  
 neither at morn nor night,  
 as to feel joy in life,  
 if o'er the people plays not  
 the prince's beam of light;  
 if his war-steed runs not  
 under the chieftain hither,  
 to the gold bit accustomed;  
 if in the king I cannot rejoice.

35. So had Helgi  
 struck with fear  
 all his foes  
 and their kindred,  
 as before the wolf  
 the goats run frantic  
 from the fell,  
 of terror full.

36. So himself Helgi  
 among warriors bore,  
 as the towering ash  
 is among thorns,  
 or as the fawn,  
 moistened with dew,  
 that more proudly stalks  
 than all the other beasts,  
 and its horns glisten  
 against the sky.

A mound was raised for Helgi; but when he came to Valhall, Odin offered him rule over all jointly with himself. Helgi said:

37. Thou, Hunding! shalt  
 for every man  
 a foot-bath get,  
 and fire kindle;  
 shalt bind the dogs,  
 to the horses look,  
 to the swine give wash,  
 ere to sleep thou goest.

A female slave passing at evening by Helgi's mound, saw him riding towards it with many men:

38. Is it a delusion  
 which methinks I see,  
 or the powers' dissolution,  
 that ye, dead men, ride,  
 and your horses  
 with spurs urge on,  
 or to warriors is  
 a home journey granted?

Helgi  
 39. 'Tis no delusion  
 which thou thinkst to see,  
 nor of mankind the end,  
 although thou seest us,  
 although our horses we  
 with spurs urge on,  
 nor to warriors is  
 a home-journey granted.

The slave went home and said to Sigrún:

40. Sigrún! go forth  
 from Sefafiöll,  
 if the people's chief  
 thou desirest to meet.  
 The mound is opened,  
 Helgi is come,  
 his wounds still bleed;  
 the prince prayed thee  
 that thou wouldst still  
 the trickling blood.

Sigrún entered the mound to Helgi and said:

41. Now am I as glad,  
 at our meeting,  
 as the voracious  
 hawks of Odin,  
 when they of slaughter know;  
 of warm prey,  
 or, dewy-feathered, see  
 the peep of day.

42. I will kiss  
 my lifeless king,  
 ere thou thy bloody corslet  
 layest aside.  
 Thy hair is, Helgi!  
 tumid with sweat of death;  
 my prince is all  
 bathed in slaughter-dew;

cold, clammy are the hands  
of Högni's son.  
How shall I, prince! for this  
make thee amends?

Helgi  
43. Thou art alone the cause,<sup>4</sup>  
Sigrún of Sefafiöll!  
that Helgi is  
with sorrow's dew suffused.  
Thou weepst, gold-adorned!  
cruel tears,  
sun-bright daughter of the south!  
ere to sleep thou goest;  
each one falls bloody  
on the prince's breast,  
wet, cold, and piercing,  
with sorrow big.

44. We shall surely drink  
delicious draughts,  
though we have lost  
life and lands.  
No one shall  
a song of mourning sing,  
though on my breast  
he wounds behold.  
Now are women  
in the mound enclosed,  
daughters of kings,  
with us the dead.

4. The superstition commemorated in this strophe is, no doubt, the origin of some very beautiful ballads in the later literature of Scandinavia and Germany referring to this superstition:

“When thou, my dear, art cheerful,  
    “And easy in thy mind,  
“The coffin where I slumber  
    “Is all with roses lined.  
“But oft as thou 'rt in sorrow,  
    “And bow'd with grief so sore,  
“Is all the while my coffin  
    “Brim full of blood and gore.”

Sigrún prepares a bed in the mound.

45. Here, Helgi! have I for thee  
 a peaceful  
 couch prepared,  
 for the Ylfings' son.  
 On thy breast I will,  
 chieftain! repose,  
 as in my hero's lifetime  
 I was wont.

Helgi  
 46. Nothing I now declare  
 unlooked for,  
 at Sefafiöll  
 late or early,  
 since in a corpse's  
 arms thou sleepest,  
 Högni's fair daughter!  
 in a mound,  
 and thou art living,  
 daughter of kings!

47. Time 'tis for me to ride  
 on the reddening ways:  
 let the pale horse  
 tread the aerial path.  
 I towards the west must go  
 over Vindhiálm's bridge,  
 ere Salgofnir  
 awakens heroes.

Helgi and his attendants rode their way, but Sigrún and hers proceeded to their habitation. The following evening Sigrún ordered her serving-maid to hold watch at the mound; but at nightfall, when Sigrún came thither, she said:

48. Now would he come,  
 if he to come intended,  
 Sigmund's son,  
 from Odin's halls.  
 I think the hope lessens  
 of the king's coming,

since on the ash's boughs  
 the eagles sit,  
 and all the folk  
 to the dreams' tryst are hastening.

Serving-maid  
 49. Be not so rash  
 alone to go,  
 daughter of heroes!  
 to the house of draugs:<sup>5</sup>  
 more powerful are,  
 in the night-season,  
 all dead warriors,  
 then in the light of day.

Sigrún's life was shortened by grief and mourning. It was a belief in ancient times that men were regenerated, but that is now regarded as an old crone's fancy. Helgi and Sigrún are said to have been regenerated. He was then called Helgi Haddingiaskadi, and she Kara Hálfðan's daughter, as it is said in the *Songs of Kara*; and she also was a Valkyria.

5. Probably house of draffs; place of swine, swill, lees.



## Sinfiötlalok: Sinfiötli's End

Sigmund Völsung's son was a king in Frankland. Sinfiötli was the eldest of his sons, the second was Helgi, the third Hámund. Borghild, Sigmund's wife, had a brother named Gunnar; but Sinfiötli her step-son and Gunnar both courted one woman, on which account Sinfiötli slew Gunnar. When he came home, Borghild bade him go away, but Sigmund offered the blood-fine, which it was incumbent on her to accept. At the funeral feast Borghild presented the beer: she took a large horn full of poison, and offered it to Sinfiötli; who, when he looked into the horn, and saw that there was poison in it, said to Sigmund: "the drink ferments!" Sigmund took the horn and drank up the contents. It is said that Sigmund was so strong that no poison could hurt him, either outwardly or inwardly; but that all his sons could endure poison outwardly. Borghild bore another horn to Sinfiötli, and prayed him to drink, when all took place as before. Yet a third time she offered him the horn, using reproachful words on his refusing to drink. He said as before to Sigmund, but the latter answered: "Let it pass through thy lips, my son." Sinfiötli drank and instantly died. Sigmund bore him a long way in his arms, and came to a long and narrow firth, where there was a little vessel and one man in it. He offered Sigmund to convey him over the firth; but when Sigmund had borne the corpse to the vessel, the boat was full-laden. The man then said that Sigmund should go before through the firth. He then pushed off his boat and instantly departed.

King Sigmund sojourned long in Denmark, in Borghild's kingdom, after having espoused her. He then went south to Frankland, to the kingdom he there possessed. There he married Hiördís, the daughter of Eylimi. Sigurd was their son. King Sigmund fell in a battle with the sons of Hunding. Hiördís was afterwards married to Alf, son of King Híálprek, with whom Sigurd grew up in childhood. Sigmund and his sons exceeded all other men in strength, and stature, and courage, and all accomplishments, though Sigurd was foremost of all; and in old traditions he is mentioned as excelling all men, and as the most renowned of warlike kings.



# SigurParkviða Fafnisbana Fyrsta eða Gripisspa

## The First Lay of Sigurd Fafnicide or Gripir's Prophecy

Gripir was the name of the son of Eylimi, the brother of Hiördis. He ruled over lands, and was of all men wisest and prescient of the future. Sigurd rode alone, and came to Gripir's dwelling. Sigurd was of a distinguished figure. He found a man to address outside the hall, whose name was Geitir. Sigurd applied to him, and asked:

1. Who here inhabits,  
in these towers?  
what nation's king  
do people name him?

Geitir  
Gripir is named  
the chief of men,  
he who rules  
a firm realm and people.

Sigurd  
2. Is the wise king  
of the land at home?  
Will the chief with me  
come and converse?  
With him needs speech  
an unknown man:  
I desire speedily  
Gripir to see.

Geitir  
3. The glad king will  
of Geitir ask,  
who the man is  
that demands speech of Gripir.

Sigurd  
 Sigurd I am named,  
 born of Sigmund,  
 and Hiördis is  
 the chieftain's mother.

4. Then went Geitir,  
 Gripir to inform:  
 "Here is a man without,  
 a stranger, come;  
 of aspect he  
 is most distinguished.  
 He desires, king!  
 with thee to speak."

5. Goes from the hall  
 the lord of men,  
 and the stranger prince  
 kindly greets:  
 "Welcome, Sigurd!  
 better had it been earlier;  
 but do thou, Geitir!  
 take charge of Grani."

6. They began to talk,  
 and much to tell,  
 when the sagacious men  
 together met.  
 "Tell me, if thou knowest,  
 my mother's brother!  
 how will Sigurd's  
 life fall out?"

Gripir  
 7. Thou wilt foremost be  
 of men beneath the sun,  
 exalted high above  
 every king;  
 liberal of gold,  
 but of flight sparing,  
 of aspect comely,  
 and wise of words.

Sigurd

8. Say thou, sage king!  
 more than I ask,  
 thou wise one, to Sigurd,  
 if thou thinkst to see it:  
 what will first happen  
 for my advancement,  
 when from thy dwelling  
 I shall have departed?

Gripir

9. First wilt thou, prince!  
 avenge thy father,  
 and for the wrongs of Eylimi  
 wilt retaliate;  
 thou wilt the cruel  
 sons of Hunding  
 boldly lay low;  
 thou wilt have victory.

Sigurd

10. Say, noble king!  
 kinsman mine!  
 with all forethought,  
 as we hold friendly converse;  
 seest thou of Sigurd  
 those bold achievements,  
 that will highest soar  
 under heaven's regions?

Gripir

11. Thou alone wilt slay  
 that glistening serpent,  
 which greedy lies  
 on Gnitaheid;  
 thou shalt of both  
 the slayer be,  
 Regin and Fafnir.  
 Gripir tells truly.

Sigurd

12. Riches will abound,  
if I so bring  
conflict among men,  
as thou for certain sayest.  
Apply thy mind,  
and at length say  
what will yet  
my life befall.

Gripir

13. Thou wilt find  
Fafnir's lair,  
and thence wilt take  
splendid riches,  
with gold wilt load  
Grani's back.  
Thou wilt to Giuki ride,  
the war-famed prince.

Sigurd

14. Yet must thou, prince!  
in friendly speech,  
foresighted king!  
more relate.  
I shall be Giuki's guest,  
and I shall thence depart:  
what will next  
my life befall?

Gripir

15. A king's daughter  
will on a mountain sleep,  
fair, in corslet cased,  
after Helgi's death.  
Thou wilt strike  
with a keen sword,  
wilt the corslet sever  
with Fafnir's bane.

Sigurd

16. The corslet is ript open,  
the maid begins to speak.  
When awakened  
from her sleep,  
on what will she chiefly  
with Sigurd converse hold,  
which to the prince's  
benefit may tend?

Gripir

17. She to thee, powerful one!  
runes will teach,  
all those which men  
ought to know;  
and in every man's  
tongue to speak,  
and medicines for healing.  
May good await thee, king!

Sigurd

18. Now that is past,  
the knowledge is acquired,  
and I am ready thence  
away to ride.  
Apply thy mind,  
and at length say  
what more will  
my life befall.

Gripir

19. Thou wilt find  
Heimir's dwellings,  
and the glad guest wilt be  
of that great king.  
Vanished is, Sigurd!  
that which I foresaw;  
no further mayest thou  
Gripir question.

Sigurd

20. Now bring me grief  
the words thou speakest;  
for thou foreseest, king!  
much further;  
thou knowest of too great  
calamity to Sigurd;  
therefore thou, Gripir!  
wilt not utter it.

Gripir

21. Of thy life  
the early portion  
lay before me  
clearest to contemplate.  
I am not truly  
accounted sage,  
nor of the future prescient:  
that which I knew is gone.

Sigurd

22. No man I know  
on the earth's surface,  
who greater prescience has  
than thou, Gripir!  
Thou mayest not conceal it,  
unhappy though it be,  
or if ill betide  
my life.

Gripir

23. Not with vices will  
thy life be sullied;  
let that, noble prince!  
in thy mind be borne;  
for while mankind exists,  
thy name,  
director of spear-storm!  
will be supreme.



Sigurd

24. The worst seems to me,  
that Sigurd is compelled  
from the king to part  
in such uncertainty.  
Show me the way  
all is decreed before  
great chieftain! if thou wilt,  
my mother's brother!

Gripir

25. To Sigurd I will now  
openly tell,  
since the chieftain me  
thereto compels:  
thou wilt surely find  
that I lie not.  
A certain day is  
for thy death decreed.

Sigurd

26. I would not importune  
the mighty prince,  
but rather Gripir's  
good counsel have.  
Now I fain would know,  
though grateful it may not be,  
what prospect Sigurd has  
lying before him.

Gripir

27. There is with Heimir  
a maiden fair of form,  
she is by men  
Brynhild named,  
daughter of Budli;  
but the dear king  
Heimir nurtures  
the hard-souled damsel.

Sigurd

28. What is it to me,  
 although the maiden be  
 of aspect fair?  
 nurtured with Heimir?  
 That thou, Gripir! must  
 fully declare;  
 for thou forseest  
 my whole destiny.

Gripir

29. She will thee bereave  
 of almost every joy,  
 the fair-faced  
 foster-child of Heimir.  
 Thou wilt not sleep  
 nor of affairs discourse,  
 nor men regard;  
 only this maiden thou wilt see.

Sigurd

30. What remedy for Sigurd  
 will be applied;  
 tell me that, Gripir!  
 if it seem good to thee.  
 Shall I obtain the damsel?  
 with dowry purchase  
 the lovely  
 royal daughter?

Gripir

31. Ye will each swear  
 unnumbered oaths,  
 solemnly binding,  
 but few will keep.  
 Hast thou been Guiki's  
 guest one night,  
 thou wilt have forgotten  
 the fair ward of Heimir.

Sigurd

32. How is that, Gripir!  
 explain it to me:  
 seest thou such fickleness  
 in the king's mind,  
 that with that maiden I  
 shall my engagement break,  
 whom with my whole heart  
 I thought to love?

Gripir

33. Prince! thou wilt be snared  
 in another's wiles,  
 thou wilt pay the penalty  
 of Grimhild's craft;  
 the bright-haired maiden,  
 her daughter,  
 she to thee will offer.  
 This snare for the king she lays.

Sigurd

34. Shall I then with Gunnar  
 form relationship,  
 and with Gudrun  
 join in wedlock?  
 Well wived then  
 the king would be,  
 if the pangs of perjury  
 caused me no pain.

Gripir

35. Thee will Grimhild  
 wholly beguile;  
 she will implore thee  
 Brynhild to demand  
 for the hand of Gunnar,  
 king of Goths:  
 the journey thou wilt forthwith promise  
 to the king's mother.

Sigurd  
 36. Evils are at hand,  
 I can that perceive;  
 Sigurd's wits  
 will have wholly perished,  
 if I shall demand,  
 for another's hand,  
 a noble maiden  
 whom I well love.

Gripir  
 37. All of you will  
 swear mutual oaths,  
 Gunnar, and Högni,  
 and thou the third;  
 and ye will forms exchange,  
 when on the way ye are,  
 Gunnar and thou:  
 Gripir lies not.

Sigurd  
 38. To what end is that?  
 why shall we exchange  
 forms and manner,  
 when on the way we are?  
 Another fraud  
 will surely follow this,  
 altogether horrible.  
 But say on, Gripir!

Gripir  
 39. Thou wilt have Gunnar's semblance,  
 and his manners,  
 thy own eloquence,  
 and great sagacity;  
 there thou wilt betroth  
 the high-minded  
 ward of Heimir:  
 no one can that prevent.

Sigurd

40. To me that seems worse,  
that among men I shall  
be a false traitor called,  
if such take place.  
I would not  
deception practise  
on a royal maid  
the most excellent I know.

Gripir

41. Thou wilt repose,  
leader of hosts!  
pure as the maiden,  
as she thy mother were;  
therefore exalted,  
lord of men!  
while the world endures  
thy name will be.

42. The nuptials will  
of both be solemnized,  
of Sigurd and of Gunnar,  
in Giuki's halls;  
then will ye forms exchange,  
when ye home return;  
yet to himself will have  
each his own senses.

Sigurd

43. Will then Gunnar,  
chief among men,  
the noble woman wed?  
Tell me that, Gripir!  
although three nights by me  
the chieftain's bride  
glad of heart has slept?  
The like has no example.

44. How for happiness  
 shall hereafter be  
 this affinity?  
 Tell me that, Gripir!  
 Will the alliance  
 for Gunnar's solace  
 hereforth prove,  
 or even for mine?

Gripir  
 45. Thou wilt the oaths remember,  
 and must silence keep,  
 and let Gudrun enjoy  
 a happy union.  
 Brynhild nathless will herself think  
 an ill-married woman.  
 She will wiles devise  
 to avenge herself.

Sigurd  
 46. What atonement will  
 that woman take,  
 for the frauds we  
 shall have practised on her?  
 From me the maiden has  
 oaths sworn,  
 but never kept,  
 and but little joy.

Gripir  
 47. She to Gunnar will  
 plainly declare,  
 that thou didst not well  
 the oaths observe,  
 when the noble king,  
 Guiki's heir,  
 with his whole soul,  
 in thee confided.

Sigurd

48. What will then follow?

let me know that.

Will that tale

appear as true,

or that the noble woman

falsely accuses me,

and herself also.

Tell me that, Gripir!

Gripir

49. From spite towards thee,

and from o'erwhelming grief,

the powerful dame

will not most wisely act.

To the noble woman

do thou no further harm,

though thou the royal bride

with guiles has circumvented.

Sigurd

50. Will the prudent Gunnar,

Guthorm, and Högni,

at her instigation,

then proceed?

Will Giuki's sons

on their relative

redde their swords?

Tell me further, Gripir!

Gripir

51. Then will Gudrun be

furiously at heart,

when her brothers shall

on thy death resolve.

In nothing then

will that wise woman

take delight.

Such is Grimhild's work.

52. In this thou shalt find comfort,  
leader of hosts!  
This fortune is allotted  
to the hero's life:  
a more renowned man  
on earth shall never be,  
under the sun's abode,  
than thou wilt be accounted.

Sigurd

53. Now part we, now farewell!  
Fate may not be withstood.  
Now hast thou, Gripir!  
done as I prayed thee:  
thou wouldst have fain  
a happier end foretold me  
of my life's days,  
hadst thou been able.



# Sigurþarkviða Fafnisbana Önnur

## The Second Lay of Sigurd Fafnicide

Sigurd went to Hiálprek's stud and chose himself a horse, which was afterwards named Grani. Regin, Hreidmar's son, was then come to Hiálprek; he was the most skilful of men, and a dwarf in stature; he was wise, cruel, and versed in magic. Regin undertook the rearing and instruction of Sigurd, and bore him great affection. He informed Sigurd of his parentage, and how it befell that Odin, and Hoenir, and Loki came to Andvarafors (the waterfall of Andvari). In the fall there was an abundance of fish. There was a dwarf named Andvari, who had long lived in the fall in the likeness of a pike, and in which he supplied himself with food. "Our brother", continued Regin, "was named Otr, who often went in to the fall in the likeness of an otter. He had caught a salmon, and was sitting on the bank of the river with his eyes shut eating it, when Loki killed him with a stone. The Æsir thought themselves very lucky, and stripped off the otter's skin. That same evening they sought entertainment with Hreidmar, and showed their prize. Thereupon we laid hands on them, and imposed on them, as the redemption of their lives, that they should fill the otter's skin with gold, and cover it over with red gold. They thereupon sent Loki to procure gold. He went to Ran, and obtained her net, and thence proceeded to Andvarafors, and cast the net before a pike, which leapt into the net. Whereupon Loki said:

1. What fish is this,  
that in the river swims,  
and cannot from harm itself protect?  
Redeem thy life  
from Hel,  
and find me the water's flame.<sup>1</sup>

The Pike  
2. Andvari I am named,  
Oin was my father named;  
many a cataract have I passed.  
A luckless Norn  
in times of old decreed,  
that in the water I should wade.

Loki  
3. Tell me, Andvari!  
if thou wilt enjoy

1. One of many periphrases for gold.

life in the halls of men,  
 what retribution get  
 the sons of mortals,  
 if with foul words they assail each other.

Andvari

4. Cruel retribution get  
 the sons of mortals,  
 who in Vadgelmir wade:  
 for the false words  
 they have against other uttered,  
 the punishments too long endure.

Loki viewed all the gold that Andvari owned; but when he had produced the gold, he retained a single ring, which Loki also took from him. The dwarf went into his stone and said:

5. That gold  
 which the dwarf possessed,  
 shall to two brothers  
 be cause of death,  
 and to eight princes,  
 of dissension.  
 From my wealth no one  
 shall good derive.

The Æsir produced the gold to Hreidmar, and with it crammed the otter's skin full, and set it up on the feet. They then had to heap up the gold and cover it; but when that was done, Hreidmar, stepping forward, observed a whisker, and required it to be covered; whereupon Odin drew forth the ring *Andvara-naut*, and covered the hair. Loki said:

6. There is gold for thee,  
 and thou hast a great redemption  
 for my life.  
 For thy son  
 no blessing is decreed;  
 of both it shall prove the bane.

Hreidmar

7. Gifts thou hast given,  
 friendly gifts thou hast given not;  
 with a kind heart thou hast not given.  
 Of your lives ye should

have been deprived,  
had I foreknown that peril.

8. But that is worse,  
what I seem to know,  
a strife of kinsmen for a woman.  
Princes yet unborn  
I think them to be,  
for whose hate that gold is destined.

9. The red gold, I trust,  
I shall possess  
while I am living:  
of thy threats  
I entertain no fear;  
so take yourselves hence home.

Fafnir and Regin demanded of Hreidmar their share of the blood-fine for their slain brother Otr, which he refused, and Fafnir stabbed his father with a sword while sleeping. Hreidmar called out to his daughters:

10. Lyngheid and Lofnheid!  
Know my life is departing.  
To many things need compels.<sup>2</sup>

Lyngheid  
Few sisters will,  
although they lose a father,  
avenge a brother's crime.

11. Then bring forth a daughter,  
wolf-hearted fury!  
if by a chief  
thou have not a son.  
Get for the maid a spouse,  
in thy great need;  
then will her son  
thy wrong avenge.

Hreidmar then died, and Fafnir took all the gold. Regin then requested to have his share of the pat-

2. To wit, *to avenge my death on your brothers.*

rimony, but met with a refusal from Fafnir. Regin thereupon sought counsel of his sister Lyngheid, how he might obtain the patrimony. She said:

12. Thou of thy brother shall  
mildly demand  
thy patrimony and a better spirit.  
It is not seemly,  
that with the sword thou shouldst  
demand thy property of Fafnir.

The foregoing is what Regin related to Sigurd. One day, when he came to Regin's dwelling, he was kindly received, and Regin said:

13. Hither is come  
the son of Sigmund  
to our hall,  
that man of energy:  
courage he has greater  
than I aged man:  
now of a conflict have I hope  
from the fierce wolf.<sup>3</sup>

14. I will nurture  
the bold-hearted prince:  
now Yngvi's kinsman  
is to us come;  
he will be a king  
under the sun most powerful;  
over all lands  
will his destinies resound.

Sigurd was thence forward constantly with Regin, who related to him how Fafnir lay on Gnítaheid in the likeness of a serpent. He had an "Ægis-helm"<sup>4</sup> at which all living beings were terror-stricken. Regin forged a sword for Sigurd, that was named Gram, and was so sharp that immersing it in the Rhine, he let a piece of wool down the stream, when it clove the fleece asunder as water. With that sword Sigurd clove in two Regin's anvil. After that Regin instigated Sigurd to slay Fafnir. He said:

15. Loud will laugh  
Hunding's sons,  
they who Eylimi

3. Sigurd.

4. A terrific helm or headpiece.

of life deprived,  
 if the prince is  
 more desirous  
 to seek red rings,  
 than to avenge his father.

King Hiálprek collected a fleet to enable Sigurd to avenge his father. They encountered a great storm, and were driven past a certain promontory. A man was standing on the cliff who said:

16. Who ride yonder,  
 on Rævil's horses,  
 the towering billows,  
 the roaring main:  
 the sail-steeds are  
 with sweat bedewed,  
 the wave-coursers will not  
 the wind withstand.

Regin  
 17. Here am I Sigurd  
 in sea-trees;  
 a fair wind is given us  
 for death itself:  
 higher than our prows  
 the steep waves dash,  
 the rolling horses plunge.  
 Who is it that inquires?

Hnikar  
 18. They called me Hnikar,  
 when I Hugin gladdened,  
 young Völsung!  
 and battles fought.  
 Now thou mayest call me  
 the ancient of the rock,  
 Feng, or Fiölnir.  
 I desire a passage.

They turn to the land, the old man goes on board, and the storm abates. Sigurd said:

19. Tell me, Hnikar!  
since thou knowest the omens  
both of gods and men,  
which omens are best  
if to fight 'tis needful  
at the swing of glaves?

Hnikar  
20. Good omens there are many,  
if men but knew them,  
at the swing of glaves,  
a faithful fellowship, I think,  
is the dark raven's,  
with the sworded warrior.

21. The second is  
if, when thou art gone out,  
and about to depart,  
thou seest two  
renown-seeking men  
standing in the fore-court.

22. The third omen is,  
if wolves thou hearest  
howl under the ash-boughs,  
it will victory to the announce  
over helmed warriors,  
if thou seest them go before thee.

23. No man should  
fight against  
the moon's  
late-shining sister.  
They have victory,  
who can see keenly  
at the play of swords,  
or to form the wedge-array.

24. Most perilous it is,  
if with thy foot thou strikest,  
when thou to battle goest.  
Wily Dísir stand  
on either side of thee,  
and wish to see thee wounded.

25. Combed and washed  
let every brave man be,  
and at morning fed;  
for 'tis uncertain  
whither he at eve may come.  
'Tis bad to succumb to fate.

Sigurd fought a great battle with Lýngvi, Hunding's son, and his brothers, in which Lýngvi and his three brothers fell. After the battle Regin said:

26. Now is the bloody eagle,  
with the trenchant blade,  
graven on the back  
of Sigmund's slayer.  
No son of king,  
who the earth reddens,  
and the raven gladdens,  
is more excellent.

Sigurd returned home to Hiálprek, when Regin instigated him to slay Fafnir.





# Fafnismol

Sigurth and Regin went up to the Gnitaeith, and found there the track that Fafnir made when he crawled to water. Then Sigurth made a great trench across the path, and took his place therein. When Fafnir crawled from his gold, he blew out venom, and it ran down from above on Sigurth's head. But when Fafnir crawled over the trench, then Sigurth thrust his sword into his body to the heart. Fafnir writhed and struck out with his head and tail. Sigurth leaped from the trench, and each looked at the other. Fafnir said:

1. "Youth, oh, youth!      of whom then, youth, art thou born?  
Say whose son thou art,  
Who in Fafnir's blood      thy bright blade reddened,  
And struck thy sword to my heart."

Sigurth concealed his name because it was believed in olden times that the word of a dying man might have great power if he cursed his foe by his name. He said:

2. "The Noble Hart      my name, and I go  
A motherless man abroad;  
Father I had not,      as others have,  
And lonely ever I live."

Fafnir spake:

3. "If father thou hadst not,      as others have,  
By what wonder wast thou born?  
(Though thy name on the day      of my death thou hidest,  
Thou knowest now thou dost lie.)"

Sigurth spake:

4. "My race, methinks,      is unknown to thee,  
And so am I myself;  
Sigurth my name, and Sigmund's son,  
Who smote thee thus with the sword."

Fafnir spake:

5. "Who drove thee on? why wert thou driven  
My life to make me lose?  
A father brave      had the bright-eyed youth,  
For bold in boyhood thou art."

Sigurth spake:

6. "My heart did drive me, my hand fulfilled,  
And my shining sword so sharp;  
Few are keen when old age comes,  
Who timid in boyhood be."

Fafnir spake:

7. "If thou mightest grow thy friends among,  
One might see thee fiercely fight;  
But bound thou art, and in battle taken,  
And to fear are prisoners prone."

Sigurth spake:

8. "Thou blamest me, Fafnir, that I see from afar  
The wealth that my father's was;  
Not bound am I, though in battle taken,  
Thou has found that free I live."

Fafnir spake:

9. "In all I say dost thou hatred see,  
Yet truth alone do I tell;  
The sounding gold, the glow-red wealth,  
And the rings thy bane shall be."

Sigurth spake:

10. "Some one the hoard shall ever hold,  
Till the destined day shall come;  
For a time there is when every man  
Shall journey hence to Hel."

Fafnir spake:

11. "The fate of the Norns before the headland  
Thou findest, and doom of a fool;  
In the water shalt drown if thou row 'gainst the wind,  
All danger is near to death."

Sigurth spake:

12. "Tell me then, Fafnir, for wise art famed,  
And much thou knowest now:  
Who are the Norns who are helpful in need,  
And the babe from the mother bring?"

Fafnir spake:

13. "Of many births        the Norns must be,  
Nor one in race they were  
Some to gods, others        to elves are kin,  
And Dvalin's daughters some."

Sigurth spake:

14. "Tell me then, Fafnir,                for wise thou art famed,  
And much thou knowest now:  
How call they the isle        where all the gods  
And Surt shall sword-sweat mingle?"

Fafnir spake:

15. "Oskopnir is it,        where all the gods  
Shall seek the play of swords;  
Bilrost breaks                when they cross the bridge,  
And the steeds shall swim the flood.

16. "The fear-helm I wore        to afright mankind,  
While guarding my gold I lay;  
Mightier seemed I        than any man,  
For a fiercer never I found."

Sigurth spake:

17. "The fear-helm surely                no man shields  
When he faces a valiant foe;  
Oft one finds,                when the foe he meets,  
That he is not the bravest of all."

Fafnir spake:

18. "Venom I breathed        when bright I lay  
By the hoard my father had;  
(There was none so mighty        as dared to meet me,  
And weapons nor wiles I feared.)"

Sigurth spake:

19. "Glittering worm,        thy hissing was great,  
And hard didst show thy heart;  
But hatred more        have the sons of men  
For him who owns the helm."

Fafnir spake:

20. "I counsel thee, Sigurth, heed my speech,  
And ride thou homeward hence;  
The sounding gold, the glow-red wealth,  
And the rings thy bane shall be."  
(V. "For it often happens that he who gets a deathly wound yet  
avenges himself.")

Sigurth spake:

21. "Thy counsel is given, but go I shall  
To the gold in the heather hidden;  
And, Fafnir, thou with death dost fight,  
Lying where Hel shall have thee."

Fafnir spake:

22. "Regin betrayed me, and thee will betray,  
Us both to death will he bring;  
His life, methinks, must Fafnir lose,  
For the mightier man wast thou."

Regin had gone to a distance while Sigurth fought Fafnir, and came back while Sigurth was wiping the blood from his sword. Regin said:

23. "Hail to thee, Sigurth! Thou victory hast,  
And Fafnir in fight hast slain;  
Of all the men who tread the earth,  
Most fearless art thou, methinks."

Sigurth spake:

24. "Unknown it is, when all are together,  
(The sons of the glorious gods.)  
Who bravest born shall seem;  
Some are valiant who redden no sword  
In the blood of a foeman's breast."

Regin spake:

25. "Glad art thou, Sigurth, of battle gained,  
As Gram with grass thou cleanest;  
My brother fierce in fight hast slain,  
And somewhat I did myself."

Sigurth spake:

26. "Afar didst thou go while Fafnir reddened  
With his blood my blade so keen;  
With the might of the dragon my strength I matched,  
While thou in the heather didst hide."

Regin spake:

27. "Longer wouldst thou in the heather have let  
Yon hoary giant hide,  
Had the weapon availed not that once I forged,  
The keen-edged blade thou didst bear."

Sigurth spake:

28. "Better is heart than a mighty blade  
For him who shall fiercely fight;  
The brave man well shall fight and win,  
Though dull his blade may be.

29. "Brave men better than cowards be,  
When the clash of battle comes;  
And better the glad than the gloomy men  
Shall face what before him lies.

30. "Thy rede it was that I should ride  
Hither o'er mountains high;  
The glittering worm would have wealth and life  
If thou hadst not mocked at my might."

Then Regin went up to Fafnir and cut out his heart with his sword, that was named Rithil, and then he drank blood from the wounds. Regin said:

31. "Sit now, Sigurth, for sleep will I,  
Hold Fafnir's heart to the fire;  
For all his heart shall eaten be,  
Since deep of blood I have drunk."

Sigurth took Fafnir's heart and cooked it on a spit. When he thought that it was fully cooked, and the blood foamed out of the heart, then he tried it with his finger to see whether it was fully cooked. He burned his finger, and put it in his mouth. But when Fafnir's heart's-blood came on his tongue, he understood the speech of birds. He heard nut-hatches chattering in the thickets. A nut-hatch said:

32. "There sits Sigurth,     sprinkled with blood,  
 And Fafnir's heart     with fire he cooks;  
 Wise were the breaker     of rings, I ween,  
 To eat the life-muscles     all so bright."

A second spake:

33. "There Regin lies,     and plans he lays  
 The youth to betray     who trusts him well;  
 Lying words     with wiles will he speak,  
 Till his brother the maker     of mischief avenges."

A third spake:

34. "Less by a head     let the chatterer hoary  
 Go from here to Hel;  
 Then all of the wealth     he alone can wield,  
 The gold that Fafnir guarded."

A forth spake:

35. "Wise would he seem     if so he would heed  
 The counsel good     we sisters give;  
 Thought he would give,     and the ravens gladden,  
 There is ever a wolf     where his ears I spy."

A fifth spake:

36. "Less wise must be     the tree of battle  
 Than to me would seem     the leader of men,  
 If forth he lets     one brother fare,  
 When he of the other     the slayer is."

A sixth spake:

37. "Most foolish he seems     if he shall spare  
 His foe, the bane of the folk;  
 There Regin lies,     who hath wronged him so,  
 Yet falsehood knows he not."

A seventh spake:

38. "Let the head from the frost-cold     giant be hewed,  
 And let him of rings be robbed;  
 Then all the wealth     which Fafnir's was  
 Shall belong to thee alone."

Sigurth spake:

39. "Not so rich a fate shall Regin have  
As the tale of my death to tell;  
For soon the brothers both shall die,  
And hence to Hel shall go."

Sigurth hewed off Regin's head, and then he ate Fafnir's heart, and drank the blood of both Regin and Fafnir. Then Sigurth heard what the nut-hatch said:

40. "Bind, Sigurth, the golden rings together,  
Not kingly is it aught to fear;  
I know a maid, there is none so fair,  
Rich in gold, if thou mightest get her.

41. "Green the paths that to Gjuki lead,  
And his fate the way to the wanderer shows;  
The doughty king a daughter has,  
That thou as a bride mayst, Sigurth, buy."

42. Another spake:  
"A hall stands high on Hindarfjoll,  
All with flame is it ringed without;  
Warriors wise did make it once  
Out of the flaming light of the flood.<sup>1</sup>

43. "On the mountain sleeps a battle-maid,  
And about her plays the bane of the wood<sup>2</sup>;  
Ygg with the thorn hath smitten her thus,  
For she felled the fighter he fain would save.

44. "There mayst thou behold the maiden helmed,  
Who forth on Vingskornir rode from the fight;  
The victory-bringer her sleep shall break not,  
Thou heroes' son<sup>3</sup>, so the Norns have set."

Sigurth rode along Fafnir's trail to his lair, and found it open. The gate-posts were of iron, and the gates; of iron, too, were all the beams in the house, which was dug down into the earth. There Sigurth found a mighty store of gold, and he filled two chests full thereof; he took the fear-helm and a golden mail-coat and the sword Hrotti, and many other precious things, and loaded Grani with them, but the horse would not go forward until Sigurth mounted on his back.

1. Another periphrasis for gold.

2. A periphrasis for fire.

3. Of Skioldungs.





## Sigrdrífumál: The Lay of Sigrdrifa

Sigurd rode up the Hindarfjall, and directed his course southwards towards Frankland. In the fell he saw a great light, as if a fire were burning, which blazed up the sky. On approaching it, there stood a *skjaldborg*, and over it a banner. Sigurd went into the *skjaldborg*, and saw a warrior lying within it asleep, completely armed. He first took the helmet off the warrior's head, and saw that it was a woman. Her corslet was as fast as if it had grown to her body. With his sword Gram he ripped the corslet from the upper opening downwards, and then through both sleeves. He then took the corslet off from her, when she awoke, sat up and, on seeing Sigurd, said:

1. What has my corslet cut?  
why from sleep have I started?  
who hast cast from me  
the fallow bands?

Sigurd  
Sigmund's son  
hast just now ript<sup>1</sup>  
the raven's perch,<sup>1</sup>  
with Sigurd's sword.

She  
2. Long have I slept,  
long been with sleep oppressed,  
long are mortals' sufferings!  
Odin is the cause  
that I have been unable  
to cast off torpor.

Sigurd sat down and asked her name. She then took a horn filled with mead, and gave him the *minnis-cup*.

She  
3. Hail to Day!  
Hail to the sons of Day!  
To Night and her daughter hail!  
With placid eyes  
behold us here,  
and here sitting give us victory.

1. The original words, *hrafns hraelundir*, the raven's corpse-trees. So Grimm understands the line; because that bird hops about upon the armour as upon a tree.

4. Hail to the Æsir!  
 Hail to the Asyniur!  
 Hail to the bounteous earth!  
 Words and wisdom  
 give to us noble twain,  
 and healing hands<sup>2</sup> while we live.

She was named Sigrdrífa, and was a Valkyria. She said that two kings had made war on each other, one of whom was named Hiálmgunnar; he was old and a great warrior, and Odin had promised him victory. The other was Agnar, a brother of Höða, whom no divinity would patronize. Sigrdrífa overcame Hiálmgunnar in battle; in revenge for which Odin pricked her with a sleep-thorn, and declared that thenceforth she should never have victory in battle, and should be given in marriage. "But I said to him, that I had bound myself by a vow not to espouse any man who could be made to fear." Sigurd answers, and implores her to teach him wisdom, as she had intelligence from all regions:

Sigrdrífa  
 5. Beer I bear to thee,  
 column<sup>3</sup> of battle!  
 with might mingled,  
 and with bright glory:  
 'tis full of song,  
 and salutary saws,  
 of potent incantations,  
 and joyous discourses.

6. Sig-runes thou must know,  
 if victory (sigr) thou wilt have,  
 and on thy sword's hilt grave them;  
 some on the chapes,  
 some on the guard,  
 and twice the name of Tý.

7. Öl- (beer-) runes thou must know,  
 if thou wilt not that another's wife,  
 thy trust betray, if thou in her confide.  
 On the horn must they be graven,  
 and on the hand's back,  
 and Naud<sup>4</sup> on the nail be scored.

2. The superstition of the *healing hand* is not yet extinct in Iceland. Dr. Maurer relates a story of a man in Reykjavik to whom it would seem to have been communicated by an elfin, in a dream.

3. Literally *apple-tree*.

4. The name of a rune.

8. A cup must be blessed,  
and against peril guarded,  
and garlick in the liquor cast:  
then I know  
thou wilt never have  
mead with treachery mingled.

9. Biarg- (help-) runes thou must know,  
if thou wilt help,  
and loose the child from women.  
In the palm they must be graven,  
and round the joints be clasped,  
and the Dísir prayed for aid.

10. Brim- (sea-) runes thou must know,  
if thou wilt have secure  
afloat thy sailing steeds.  
On the prow they must be graven,  
and on the helm-blade,  
and with fire to the oar applied.  
No surge shall be so towering,  
nor waves so dark,  
but from the ocean thou safe shalt come.

11. Lim- (branch-) runes thou must know,  
if thou a leech wouldst be,  
and wounds know how to heal.  
On the bark they must be graven,  
and on the leaves of trees,  
of those whose boughs bend eastward.

12. Mál- (speech-) runes thou must know,  
if thou wilt that no one  
for injury with hate requite thee.  
Those thou must wind,  
those thou must wrap round,  
those thou must altogether place  
in the assembly,  
where people have  
into full court to go.

13. Hug- (thought-) runes thou must know,  
if thou a wiser man wilt be  
than every other.  
Those interpreted,  
those graved,  
those devised Hropt,  
from the fluid,  
which had leaked  
from Heiddraupnir's head,  
and from Hoddropnir's horn.

14. On a rock he stood,  
with edged sword,  
a helm on his head he bore.  
Then spake Mim's head  
its first wise word,  
and true saying uttered.

15. They are, it said, on the shield graven,  
which stands before the shining god,  
or Arvagr's ear,  
and on Alsvid's hoof,  
on the wheel which rolls  
under Rögnir's ear,  
on Sleipnir's teeth,  
and on the sledge's bands.

16. On the bear's paw,  
and on Bragi's tongue,  
on the wolf's claws,  
and the eagle's beak,  
on bloody wings,  
and on the bridge's end,  
on the releasing hand,  
and on the healing's track.

17. On glass and on gold,  
 on amulets of men,  
 in wine and in wort,  
 and in the welcome seat,  
 on Gúngnir's point,  
 and on Grani's breast,  
 on the Norn's nail,  
 and the owl's neb.

18. All were erased  
 that were inscribed,  
 and mingled with the sacred mead,  
 and sent on distant ways:  
 they are with the Æsir,  
 they are with the Alfar,  
 some with the wise Vanir,  
 some human beings have.

19. Those are bók-runes,  
 those are biarg-runes,  
 and all öl- (beer-) runes,  
 and precious megin- (power-) runes,  
 for those who can,  
 without confusion or corruption,  
 turn them to his welfare.  
 Use, if thou hast understood them,  
 until the powers perish.

20. Now thou shalt choose,  
 since a choice is offered thee,  
 keen armed warrior!  
 my speech, or silence:  
 think over it in thy mind.  
 All evils<sup>5</sup> have their measure.

5. An allusion to Sigurd's unhappy end.

Sigurd

21. I will not flee,  
 though thou shouldst know me doomed.  
 I am not born a craven.  
 Thy friendly counsels all  
 I will receive,  
 as long as life is in me.

Sigrdrifa

22. This I thee counsel first:  
 that towards thy kin  
 thou bear thee blameless.  
 Take not hasty vengeance,  
 although they raise up strife:  
 that, it is said, benefits the dead.

23. This I thee counsel secondly:  
 that no oath thou swear,  
 if it be not true.  
 Cruel bonds  
 follow broken faith:  
 accursed is the faith-breaker.

24. This I thee counsel thirdly:  
 that in the assembly thou  
 contend not with a fool;  
 for an unwise man  
 oft utters words  
 worse than he knows of.

25. All is vain,  
 if thou holdest silence;  
 then wilt thou seem a craven born,  
 or else truly accursed.  
 Doubtful is a servant's testimony,  
 unless a good one thou gettest.  
 On the next day  
 let his life go forth,  
 and so men's lies reward.

26. This I counsel thee fourthly:  
if a wicked sorceress  
dwells by the way,  
to go on is better  
than there to lodge,  
though night may overtake thee.

27. Of searching eyes  
the sons of men have need,  
when fiercely they have to fight:  
oft pernicious women  
by the way-side sit,  
who swords and valour deaden.

28. This I thee counsel fifthly:  
although thou see fair women  
on the benches sitting,  
let not their kindred's silver  
over thy sleep have power.  
To kiss thee entice no woman.

29. This I thee counsel sixthly:  
although among men pass  
offensive tipsy talk,  
never while drunken quarrel  
with men of war:  
wine steals the wits of many.

30. Brawls and drink  
to many men have been  
a heart-felt sorrow;  
to some their death,  
to some calamity:  
many are the griefs of men!

31. This I thee counsel seventhly:  
if thou hast disputes  
with a daring man,  
better it is for men  
to fight than to be burnt  
within their dwelling.

32. This I thee counsel eighthly:  
that thou guard thee against evil,  
and eschew deceit.  
Entice no maiden,  
nor wife of man,  
nor to wantonness incite.

33. This is thee counsel ninthly:  
that thou corpses bury,  
wherever on the earth thou findest them,  
whether from sickness they have died,  
or from the sea,  
or are from weapons dead.

34. Let a mound be raised  
for those departed;  
let their hands and head be washed,  
combed, and wiped dry,  
ere in the coffin they are laid:  
and pray for their happy sleep.

35. This I thee counsel tenthly:  
that thou never trust  
a foe's kinsman's promises,  
whose brother thou hast slain,  
or sire laid low:  
there is a wolf  
in a young son,  
though he with gold be gladdened.

36. Strifes and fierce enmities  
think not to be lulled,  
no more than deadly injury.  
Wisdom and fame in arms  
a prince not easily acquires,  
who shall of men be foremost.



37. This I counsel thee eleventhly:  
that thou at evil look,  
what course it may take.  
A long life, it seems to me  
the prince may (not) enjoy;  
fierce disputes will arise.

Sigurd said: "A wiser mortal exists not, and I swear that I will possess thee, for thou art after my heart." She answered: "Thee I will have before all others, though I have to choose among all men." And this they confirmed with oaths to each other.



## Fragments of the Lays of Sigurd and Brynhild

Sigurd then rides away from Hindarfiall, and journeys on till he comes to the habitation of Heimir, who was married to Beckhild, Brynhild's sister. Alsvið, Heimir's son, who was at play when Sigurd arrived at the mansion, received him kindly, and requested him to stay with him. Sigurd consented, and remained there a short time. Brynhild was at that time with Heimir, and was weaving within a gold border the great exploits of Sigurd.

One day, when Sigurd was come from the forest, his hawk flew to the window at which Brynhild sat employed on weaving. Sigurd ran after it, saw the lady, and appeared struck with her handiwork and beauty. On the following day Sigurd went to her apartment, and Alsvið stood outside the door shafting arrows. Sigurd said: "Hail to thee, lady!" or "How fares it with thee?" She answered: "We are well, my kindred and friends are living, but it is uncertain what any one's lot may be till their last day." He sat down by her. Brynhild said: "This seat will be allowed to few, unless my father comes." Sigurd answered: "Now is that come to pass which thou didst promise me." She said: "Here shalt thou be welcome." She then arose, and her four maidens with her, and, approaching him with a golden cup, bade him drink. He reached towards her and took hold of her hand together with the cup, and placed her by him, clasped her round the neck, kissed her, and said: "A fairer than thou was never born." She said: "it is not wise to place faith in women, for they so often break their promise." He said: "Better days will come upon us, so that we may enjoy happiness." Brynhild said: "It is not ordained that we shall live together, for I am a shield-maiden (*skjaldmær*)." Sigurd said: "Then will our happiness be best promoted, if we live together; for harder to endure is the pain which herein lies than from a keen weapon." Brynhild said: "I shall be called to the aid of warriors, but thou wilt espouse Gudrún, Giuki's daughter." Sigurd said: "No king's daughter shall ensnare me, therefore have not two thoughts on that subject; and I swear by the gods that I will possess thee and no other woman." She answered to the same effect. Sigurd thanked her for what she had said to him, and gave her a gold ring. He remained there a short time in great favour.

Sigurd now rode to Heimir's dwelling with much gold, until he came to the palace of King Giuki, whose wife was named Grimhild. They had three sons, Gunnar, Högni, and Guthorm. Gudrún was the name of their daughter. King Giuki entreated Sigurd to stay there, and there he remained a while. All appeared low by the side of Sigurd. One evening the sorceress Grimhild rose and presented a horn to Sigurd, saying: "Joyful for us is thy presence, and we desire that all good may befall thee. Take this horn and drink." He took it and drank, and with that drink forgot both his love and his vows to Brynhild. After that, Grimhild so fascinated him that he was induced to espouse Gudrún, and all pledged their faith to Sigurd, and confirmed it by oaths. Sigurd gave Gudrún to eat of Fafnir's heart, and she became afterwards far more austere than before. Their son was named Sigmund.

These fragments from the *Volsunga-Saga*, which are inserted in some paper manuscripts of the *Edda*, and containing matter probably derived from the lost poems relative to Sigurd and Brynhild, are printed in the Stockholm edition of the *Edda*. they are also given by Afzelius in his Swedish version, and partially in Danish by Finn Magnussen in his edition. A complete translation into Danish of the entire Saga has since been given by Prof. Rafn at Copenhagen.

Grimhild now counseled her son Gunnar to woo Brynhild, and consulted with Sigurd, in consequence of this design. Brynhild had vowed to wed that man only who should ride over the blazing fire that was laid around her hall. They found the hall and the fire burning around it. Gunnar rode Goti, and Högni Hölknir. Gunnar turns his horse towards the fire but it shrinks back. Sigurd said "Why dost thou shrink back, Gunnar?" Gunnar answers: "My horse will not leap this fire," and prays Sigurd to lend him Grani. "He is at thy service," said Sigurd. Gunnar now rides again towards the fire, but Grani will not go over. They then changed forms. Sigurd rides, having in his hand the sword Gram, and golden spurs on his heels. Grani runs forward to the fire when he feels the spur. There was now a great noise, at it is said:

1. The fire began to rage,  
and the earth to tremble,  
high rose the flame  
to heaven itself:  
there ventured few  
chiefs of people  
through that fire to ride,  
or to leap over.

2. Sigurd Grani  
with his sword urged,  
the fire was quenched  
before the prince,  
the flame allayed  
before the glory-seeker  
with the bright saddle  
that Rök owned.

Brynhild was sitting in a chair as Sigurd entered. She asks who he is, and he calls himself Gunnar Giuki's son. "And thou art destined to be my wife with my father's consent. I have ridden through the flickering flame (*vafrlogi*) at thy requisition." She said: "I know not well how I shall answer this." Sigurd stood erect on the floor resting on the hilt of his sword. She rose embarrassed from her seat, like a swan on the waves, having a sword in her hand, a helmet on her head, and wearing a corslet. "Gunnar," said she, "speak not so to me, unless thou art the foremost of men; and then thou must slay him who has sought me, if thou hast so much trust in thyself." Sigurd said: "Remember now thy promise, that thou wouldst go with that man who should ride through the flickering flame." She acknowledged the truth of his words, stood up, and gave him a glad welcome. He tarried there three nights, and they prepared one bed. He took the sword Gram and laid it between them. She inquired why he did so. He said that it was enjoined him so to act towards his bride on their marriage, or he would receive his death. He then took from her the ring called Andvaranaut, and gave her another that had belonged to Fafnir. After this he rode away through the same fire to his companions, when Gunnar and he again changed forms, and they then rode home.

Brynhild related this in confidence to her foster-father Heimir, and said: "A king named Gunnar has ridden through the flickering flame, and is come to speak with me; but I told him that Sigurd alone might so do, to whom I gave my vow at Hindarfiall, and that he only was the man." Heimir said that what had happened must remain as it was. Brynhild said: "Our daughter Aslaug thou shalt rear up here with thee." Brynhild then went to her father, King Budli, and he with his daughter Brynhild went to King Giuki's palace. A great feasting was afterwards held, when Sigurd remembered all his oaths to Brynhild, and yet kept silence. Brynhild and Gunnar sat at the drinking and drank wine.

One day Brynhild and Gudrún went to the river Rhine, and Brynhild went farther out into the water. Gudrún asked why she did so? Brynhild answered: "Why shall I go on along with thee in this more than in anything else?" "I presume that my father was more potent than thine, and my husband has performed more valorous deeds, and ridden through the blazing fire. They husband was King Hiálprek's thrall." Gudrún answered angrily: "Thou shouldst be wiser than to venture to vilify my husband, as it is the talk of all that no one like to him in every respect has ever come into the world; nor does it become thee to vilify him, as he was thy former husband, and slew Fafnir, and rode through the fire, whom though thoughtest was King Gunnar; and he lay with thee, and took from thee the ring Andvaranaut, and here mayest thou recognize it." Brynhild then looking at the ring, recognized it, and turned pale as though she were dead. Brynhild was very taciturn that evening, and Gudrún asked Sigurd why Brynhild was so taciturn. He dissuaded her much from making this inquiry, and said that at all events it would soon be known.

On the morrow, when sitting in their apartment, Gudrún said: "Be cheerful, Brynhild! What is it that prevents thy mirth?" Brynhild answered: "Malice drives thee to this; for thou hast a cruel heart." "Judge not so," said Gudrún. Brynhild continued: "Ask about that only which is better for thee to know; that is more befitting women of high degree. It is good, too, for thee to be content, as all goes according to thy wishes." Gudrún said: "It is premature to glory in that: this forebodes something; but what instigates thee against us?" Brynhild answered: "Thou shalt be requited for having espoused Sigurd; for I grudge thee the possession of him." Gudrún said: "We knew not of your secret." Brynhild answered: "We have had no secret, though we have sworn oaths of fidelity; and thou knowest that I have been deceived, and I will avenge it." Gudrún said: "Thou art better married than thou deservest to be, and thy violence must be cooled." "Content should I be," said Brynhild, "didst thou not possess a more renowned husband than I." Gudrún answered: "Thou hast as renowned a husband; for it is doubtful which is the greater king." Brynhild said: "Sigurd overcame Fafnir, and that is worth more than all Gunnar's kingdom, as it is said:

"Sigurd the serpent slew,  
and that henceforth shall be  
by none forgotten,  
while mankind lives:  
but thy brother  
neither dared  
through the fire to ride,  
nor over it to leap."

Guðrún said: “Grani would not run through the fire under King Gunnar; but he (Gunnar) dared to ride.” Brynhild said: “Let us not contend: I bear no good will to Grimhild.” Guðrún said: “Blame her not; for she is towards thee as to her own daughter.” Brynhild said: “She is the cause of all the evil which gnaws me. She presented to Sigurd the pernicious drink, so that he no more remembreth me.” Guðrún said: “Many an unjust word thou utterest, and this is a great falsehood.” Brynhild said: “So enjoy Sigurd as thou hast not deceived me, and may it go with thee as I imagine.” Guðrún said: “Better shall I enjoy him than thou wilt wish; and no one has said he has had too much good with me at any time.” Brynhild said: “Thou sayest ill and will repent of it. Let us cease from angry words, and not indulge in useless prattle. Long have I borne in silence the grief that dwells in my breast: I have also felt regard for thy brother. But let us talk of other things.” Guðrún said: “Your imagination looks far forward.”

Brynhild then lay in bed, and King Gunnar came to talk with her, and begged her to rise and give vent to her sorrow; but she would not listen to him. They then brought Sigurd to visit her and learn whether her grief might not be alleviated. They called to memory their oaths, and how they had been deceived, and at length Sigurd offered to marry her and put away Guðrún; but she would not hear of it. Sigurd left the apartment, but was so greatly affected by her sorrow that the rings of his corslet burst asunder from his sides, as is said in the *Sigurðarkviða*:

“Out went Sigurd  
 from that interview  
 into the hall of kings,  
 writhing in anguish;  
 so that began to start  
 the ardent warrior’s  
 iron-woven sark  
 off from his sides.”

Brynhild afterwards instigated Gunnar to murder Sigurd, saying that he had deceived them both and broken his oath. Gunnar consulted with Högni, and revealed to him this conversation. Högni earnestly strove to dissuade him from such a deed, on account of their oaths. Gunnar removed the difficulty, saying: “Let us instigate our brother Guthorm; he is young and of little judgement, and is, moreover, free of all oaths; and so avenge the mortal injury of his having seduced Brynhild.” They then took a serpent and the flesh of a wolf, and had them cooked, and gave them to him to eat, and offered him gold and a large realm, to do the deed, as is said:

“The forest-fish they roasted,  
 and the wolf’s carcase took,  
 while some to Guthorm  
 dealt out gold;  
 gave him Geri’s<sup>2</sup> flesh

2. The name of one of Odin’s wolves; here used poetically for *wolf* in general.

with his drink,  
and many other things  
steeped therein.”

With this food he became so furious, that he would instantly perpetrate the deed. On this it is related as in the *Sigurðarkviða*, when Gunnar and Brynhild conversed together.





# Sigurðarkviða Fafnisbana Þriðja

## The Third Lay of Sigurd Fafnicide

1. It was of old that Sigurd,  
the young Völsung,  
Giuki sought,  
after his conflict,  
received the pledge of friendship  
from the two brothers;  
oaths exchanged  
the bold of deed.

2. A maid they offered him,  
and treasures many,  
Guðrún, Giuki's  
youthful daughter.  
Drank and conversed,  
many days together,  
Sigurd the young  
and Giuki's sons.

3. Until they went  
to woo Brynhild,  
and with them Sigurd,  
the youthful Völsung,  
rode in company,  
who knew the way.  
He would have possessed her,  
if her possess he might.

4. Sigurd the southern  
laid a naked sword,  
a glittering falchion,  
between them;  
nor the damsel  
did he kiss,  
nor did the Hunnish king  
to his arm lift her.  
He the blooming maid  
to Giuki's son delivered.

5. She to herself a body  
was of no sin conscious,  
nor at her death-day,  
of any crime,  
that could be a stain,  
or thought to be:  
intervened therein  
the grisly fates.

6. Alone she sat without,  
at eve of day,  
began aloud  
with herself to speak:  
“Sigurd must be mine;  
I must die,  
or that blooming youth  
clasp in my arms.”

7. “Of the words I have uttered  
I now repent;  
he is Gudrún’s consort,  
and I am Gunnar’s.  
The hateful Norns  
long suffering have decreed us.”

8. Oftentimes she wandered,  
filled with evil thoughts,  
o’er ice and icebergs,  
every eve,  
when he and Gudrún  
had to their couch withdrawn  
and Sigurd her  
in the coverings wrapt,  
the Hunnish king  
his wife caressed.

9. “Devoid I go  
of spouse and pleasure;  
I will beguile myself  
with vengeful thoughts.”

10. By those fits of fury  
she was impelled to murder.  
“Thou, Gunnar! shalt  
wholly lose  
my land,  
and myself also.  
Never shall I be happy,  
king! with thee.

11. I will return  
thither from whence I came,  
to my near kindred,  
my relations;  
there will I remain,  
and slumber life away,  
cause to be slain,  
and a king become  
than the other greater.

12. Let the son go  
together with the father,  
the young wolf may not  
longer be fostered.  
For whom will vengeance  
be the easier  
to appease,  
if the son lives?”

13. Wroth was Gunnar,  
and with grief borne down;  
in his mind revolved,  
sat the whole day;  
he knew not well,  
nor could devise,  
what were most desirable  
for him to do,  
or were most fitting  
to be done,  
when he should find himself  
of the Völsung bereft,  
and in Sigurd  
a great loss sustain.

14. Much he thought,  
and also long,  
that it did not  
often happen,  
that from their royal state  
women withdrew.  
Högni he then  
to counsel summoned,  
in whom he placed  
the fullest trust.

15. “Of all to me Brynhild,  
Budli’s daughter  
is the dearest;  
she is the chief of women:  
rather will I  
my life lay down  
than that fair one’s  
treasures lose.

16. “With thou the prince  
for his wealth circumvent?  
good ‘tis to command  
the ore of Rhine,  
and at ease  
over riches rule,  
and in tranquillity  
happiness enjoy.”

17. This alone Högni  
for answer gave:  
“It beseems us not  
so to do,  
by the sword to break  
sworn oaths,  
oaths sworn,  
and plighted faith.

18. "We know not on earth  
men more fortunate,  
while we four  
over the people rule,  
and the Hun lives,  
that warlike chief;  
nor on earth,  
a race more excellent,  
if we five sons  
long shall foster,  
and the good progeny  
can increase."

19. I know full well  
whence the causes spring:  
Brynhild's importunity  
is over-great.

20. We will Guthorm,  
our younger brother,  
and not over-wise,  
for the deed prepare:  
he is free from  
sworn oaths,  
sworn oaths,  
and plighted faith."

21. Easy it was to instigate  
the ferocious spirit:  
in the heart of Sigurd  
stood his sword.

22. On vengeance bent,  
the warrior in his chamber  
hurled his brand after  
the fierce assassin;  
to Guthorm flew  
dartlike Gram's  
gleaming steel  
from the king's hand.

23. Fell the murderer  
in two parts,  
arms and head  
flew far away,  
but his feet's part  
fell backwards on the place.

24. Sunk in sleep was Guðrún,  
in her bed,  
void of cares,  
by Sigurd's side:  
but she awoke  
of joys bereft,  
when in the blood  
of Frey's friend she swam.

25. So violently struck she  
her hands together,  
that the stout of heart  
rose in his bed.  
"Weep not, Guðrún!  
so cruelly,  
my blooming bride!  
thy brothers live.

26. An heir I have,  
alas! too young;  
he cannot flee from  
the hostile house;  
among themselves they  
recently have  
dark and evil  
counsels devised.

27. Never henceforth,  
although seven thou bear,  
will such a son  
to the trysting with them ride.  
Full well I know  
how this has befallen:  
Brynhild the sole cause is  
of all the evil.

28. Me the maiden loved  
more than any man;  
but towards Gunnar  
I sinned not;  
affinity I held sacred,  
and sworn oaths;  
thenceforward I was called  
his consort's friend."

29. The woman gave forth sighs,  
and the king his life.  
So violently she struck  
her hands together,  
that the beakers on the wall  
responsive rang,  
and in the court  
the geese loudly screamed.

30. Laughed then Brynhild,  
Budli's daughter,  
once only,  
from her whole soul,  
when in her bed  
she listened to  
the loud lament  
of Giuki's daughter.

31. Then said Gunnar,  
the hawk-bearing prince:  
"Laugh not thereat,  
thou barbarous woman!  
glad on thy couch,  
as if good awaited thee.  
Why hast thou lost  
that beauteous colour?  
authoress of crime!  
Methinks to death thou art doomed.

32. Well doest thou deserve,  
above all women,  
that before thy eyes,  
we should lay Atli low,  
that thou shouldst see thy brother's  
blood-streaming sore,  
his gory wounds  
shouldst have to bind."

33. Then said Brynhild, Budli's daughter:  
"No one provokes thee, Gunnar!  
complete is thy work of death.  
Little does Atli  
thy hatred fear;  
his life will  
outlast thine,  
and his might  
be ever greater.

34. Gunnar! I will tell thee,  
though thou well knowest it,  
how early ye  
resolved on crimes.  
I was o'er-young  
and unrestrained,  
with wealth endowed,  
in my brother's house.

35. Nor did I desire  
to marry any man,  
before ye Giukungs  
rode to our dwelling,  
three on horseback,  
powerful kings:  
would that journey  
had never been!



36. Then myself I promised  
to the great king,  
who with gold sat  
on Grani's back.  
In eyes he did not  
you resemble,  
nor was at all  
in aspect like:  
yet ye thought yourselves  
mighty kings.

37. And to me apart  
Atli said,  
that he would not have  
our heritage divided,  
nor gold nor lands,  
unless I let myself be married,  
nor grant me any part  
of the acquired gold,  
which he to me a girl  
had given to possess,  
and to me a child  
in money counted.

38. Then distracted was  
my mind thereon,  
whether I should engage in conflict,  
and death dispense,  
valiant in arms,  
for my brother's quarrel.  
That would then  
be world-widely known,  
and to many a one  
bring heartfelt anguish.

39. Our reconciliation  
 we let follow:  
 to me it had been more pleasing  
 the treasures to accept,  
 the red-gold rings  
 of Sigmund's son:  
 nor did I another's  
 gold desire;  
 him alone I loved,  
 none other.  
 Menskögul<sup>1</sup> had not  
 a changing mind.

40. All this will Atli  
 hereafter find,  
 when he shall hear of  
 my funeral rites completed;  
 for never shall  
 the heavy-hearted woman  
 with another's husband  
 pass her life.  
 Then will my wrongs  
 be all avenged.<sup>1</sup>”

41. Up rose Gunnar,  
 prince of warriors,  
 and round his consort's neck  
 laid his hands;  
 all drew nigh,  
 yet each one singly,  
 through honest feeling,  
 to dissuade her.

42. She from her neck  
 those about her cast;  
 she let no one stay her  
 from her long journey.

1. That is, Skogul with the necklace; Brynhild applies this name to herself, which is a compound of *men*, necklace, *monile*, and Skogul, the name of a Valkyria.

43. He then called Högni  
to consultation.

“I will that all our folk  
to the hall be summoned,  
thine with mine  
now ‘tis most needful  
to see if we can hinder  
my consort’s fatal course,  
till from our speech  
a hindrance may come:  
then let us leave  
necessity to rule.”

44. To him Högni  
answer gave:

“Let no one hinder her  
from the long journey,  
whence may she never  
born again return.  
Unblest she came  
on her mother’s lap,  
born in the world  
for ceaseless misery,  
for many a man’s  
heart-felt sorrow.”

45. Downcast he  
from the meeting turned  
to where the lady  
treasures distributed.  
She was viewing  
all she owned:  
hungry female thralls  
and chamber-women.  
She put on her golden corslet  
no good meditated  
ere herself she pierced,  
with the sword’s point.

46. On the pillow she  
turned to the other side,  
and, wounded with the glave,  
on her last counsels thought.

47. "Now let come those  
who desire gold,  
and aught less precious,  
to receive from me.  
To every one I give  
a gilded necklace,<sup>2</sup>  
needle-work and coverlets,  
splendid weeds."

48. All were silent,  
thought on what to do,  
and all together  
answer gave:  
"Too many are there dead:  
we will yet live,  
still be hungry hall-servants,  
to do what fitting is."

49. At length after reflection,  
the lady linen-clad,  
young in years,  
words in answer uttered:  
"I desire that none,  
dead to entreaty, should  
by force, for our sake,  
lose their life.

50. Yet o'er your bones  
will burn  
fewer ornaments,  
Menia's good meal,<sup>3</sup>  
when ye go hence  
me to seek.

2. Necklaces usually consisted in gold and silver chains or laces with ornaments attached to them; if these resembled the sun or moon they were called *Sigli, suns* (such were those here spoken of); and such was the necklace worn by Freyja, the bright goddess of the Vanir.

3. Menia's meal, or flour, is gold.

51. Gunnar! sit down,  
I will tell to thee,  
that of life now hopeless is  
thy bright consort.  
Thy vessel will not be  
always afloat,  
though I shall have  
my life resigned.

52. With Gudrún thou wilt be reconciled,  
sooner than thou thinkest:  
that wise woman has  
by the king  
sad memorials,  
after her consort's death.

53. There is born a maid,  
which her mother rears;  
brighter far  
than the clear day,  
than the sun's beam,  
will Svanhild be.

54. Gudrún thou wilt give  
to an illustrious one,  
a warrior, the bane  
of many men:  
not to her wish  
will she be married;  
Atli will come  
her to espouse,  
Budli's son,  
my brother.

55. Much have I in memory  
how I was treated,  
when ye me so cruelly  
had deceived:  
robbed I was of happiness,  
while my life lasted.

56. Thou will desire  
Oddrún to possess,  
but Atli will  
permit it not;  
in secret ye will  
each other meet.  
She will love thee,  
as I had done,  
if us a better fate  
had been allotted.

57. Thee will Atli  
barbarously treat;  
in the narrow serpent-den  
wilt thou be cast.

58. It will too come to pass,  
not long after,  
that Atli will  
his soul resign,  
his prosperity,  
and cease to live;  
for Gudrún in her vengeance  
him in his bed will slay,  
through bitterness of spirit,  
with the sword's sharp edge.

59. More seemly would appear  
our sister Gudrún,  
had she in death  
her first consort followed,  
had but good counsel  
been to her given,  
or she a soul possessed  
resembling mine,

60. Faintly now I speak  
but for our sake  
she will not  
lose her life.  
She will be borne  
on towering billows

to King Jonakr's  
 paternal soil.  
 Doubts will be in the resolves  
 of Jonakr's sons.

61. She will Svanhild  
 send from the land,  
 her daughter,  
 and Sigurd's.  
 Her will destroy  
 Bikki's counsel;  
 for Jörmunrek  
 for evil lives.  
 Then will have passed away  
 all Sigurd's race,  
 and Guðrún's tears  
 will be the more.

62. One prayer I have to thee  
 yet to make,  
 in this world't will be  
 my last request:  
 Let in the plain be raised  
 a pile so spacious,  
 that for us all  
 like room may be,  
 for those who shall have died  
 with Sigurd.

63. Bedeck the pile about  
 with shields and hangings,  
 a variegated corpse-cloth,  
 and multitude of slain.  
 Let them burn the Hun<sup>4</sup>  
 on the one side of me;

64. Let them with the Hun  
 burn on the other side,  
 my household slaves,  
 with collars splendid,

two at our heads,  
 and two hawks;  
 then will all be  
 equally distributed.

65. Let also lie  
 between us both  
 the sword with rings adorned,  
 the keen-edged iron,  
 so again be placed,  
 as when we both  
 one couch ascended,  
 and were then called  
 by the name of consorts.

66. Then will not clang  
 against his heel  
 the hall's bright gates,  
 with splendid ring,  
 if my train  
 him hence shall follow.  
 Then will our procession  
 appear not mean.

67. For him will follow  
 five female thralls,  
 eight male slaves  
 of gentle birth,  
 fostered with me,  
 and with my patrimony,  
 which to his daughter  
 Budli gave.

68. Much I have said,  
 and more would say,  
 if the sword would grant me  
 power of speech.  
 My voice fails,  
 my wounds swell:  
 truth only I have uttered;  
 so I will cease."



# Brot af Brynhildarkviða

## Fragments of the Lay of Brynhild

Gunnar

1. “Why art thou, Brynhild!  
Budli’s daughter!  
absorbed in evil  
and murderous thoughts?  
What injury  
has Sigurd done thee,  
that thou the hero wilt  
of life bereave?”

Brynhild

2. “Sigurd to me  
oaths has sworn,  
all falsehoods.  
He at a time deceived me  
when he should have been  
of all oaths  
most observant.”

Högni

3. “Thee Brynhild has  
in anger instigated  
evil to perpetrate,  
harm to execute.  
She grudges Guðrún  
her happy marriage,  
and thee,  
possession of herself”

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\*\*\*\*\*

4. Some a wolf roasted,  
some a snake cut up,  
some to Guthorm  
served the wolf,  
before they might,  
eager for crime,  
on the mighty man  
lay their hands.

5. Without stood Guðrún,  
Giuki's daughter,  
and these words  
first of all she uttered:  
"Where is now Sigurd,  
lord of warriors,  
seeing that my kinsmen  
foremost ride?"

6. Högni alone to her  
answer gave:  
"Asunder have we Sigurd  
hewed with our swords;  
his grey steed bends  
o'er the dead chief."

7. Then said Brynhild,  
Budli's daughter,  
"Well shall ye now enjoy  
arms and lands.  
Sigurd would alone  
over all have ruled,  
had he a little longer  
life retained.

8. Unseemly it had been  
that he should so have ruled  
over Giuki's heritage  
and the Goths' people,  
when he five sons,  
for the fall of hosts,  
eager for warfare,  
had begotten."

9. Then laughed Brynhild  
the whole burgh resounded  
once only  
from her whole heart:  
“Well shall ye enjoy  
lands and subjects,  
now the daring king  
ye have caused to fall.”

10. Then said Gudrún,  
Guiki's daughter:  
“Much thou speakest,  
things most atrocious:  
may fiends have Gunnar,  
Sigurd's murderer!  
Souls malevolent  
vengeance awaits.”

11. Sigurd had fallen  
south of the Rhine:  
loud from a tree  
a raven screamed:  
“With your blood will Atli  
his sword's edge redden;  
the oaths ye have sworn  
your slaughter shall dissolve.”

12. Evening was advanced,  
much was drunken,  
then did pleasant talk  
of all kinds pass:  
all sank in sleep,  
when to rest they went.  
Gunnar alone was wakeful  
longer than all:

13. He began his foot to move,  
and much with himself to speak;  
the warlike chief  
in his mind pondered,  
what during the conflict  
the raven and the eagle  
were ever saying,  
as they rode home.

14. Brynhild awoke,  
Budli's daughter,  
daughter of the Skiöldungs,  
a little ere day:  
"Urge me or stay me  
the mischief is perpetrated  
my sorrow to pour forth,  
or so suppress it."

15. All were silent  
at these words;  
few understood  
the lady's conduct,  
that weeping she  
should begin to speak  
of what she laughing  
had desired.

16. "In my dream, Gunnar!  
all seemed so horrid;  
in the chamber all was dead;  
my bed was cold;  
and thou, king! wast riding  
of joy bereft,  
with fetters loaded,  
to a hostile host.  
So will ye all,  
race of Niflungs!  
be of power deprived,  
perjurers as ye are!

17. Ill Gunnar!  
 didst thou remember,  
 when blood ye in your footsteps  
 both let flow;  
 now hast thou him  
 ill for all that requited,  
 because he would  
 prove himself foremost.

18. Then was it proved,  
 when the hero had  
 ridden to see me,  
 to woo me,  
 how the warlike chief  
 whilom held sacred  
 his oath towards  
 the youthful prince.

19. Laid his sword,  
 with gold adorned,  
 the illustrious king  
 between us both:  
 outward its edges were  
 with fire wrought,  
 but with venom drops  
 tempered within.”

From this lay, in which the death of Sigurd is related, it appears that he was slain without doors, while some relate that he was slain sleeping in his bed: but the Germans say he was slain out in the forest; and it is told in the *Guðrúnarkviða hin Fornra*, that Sigurd and the sons of Giuki had ridden to the public assembly (*Þing*) when he was slain. But it is said by all, without exception, that they broke faith with him, and attacked him while lying down and unprepared.



## Guþrúnarkviða Fyrsta: The First Lay of Guðrún

Guðrún sat over Sigurd dead; she wept not as other women, although ready to burst with sorrow. Both men and women, came to console her, but that was not easy. It is said by some that Guðrún had eaten of Fafnir's heart, and therefore understood the talk of birds. This is also sung of Guðrún:

1. Of old it was that Guðrún  
prepared to die,  
when she sorrowing  
over Sigurd sat.  
No sigh she uttered,  
nor with her hands beat,  
nor wailed,  
as other women.

2. Jarls came forward  
of great sagacity,  
from her sad state of mind  
to divert her.  
Guðrún could not  
shed a tear,  
such was her affliction;  
ready she was to burst.

3. Sat there noble  
wives of jarls,  
adorned with gold,  
before Guðrún;  
each of them  
told her sorrows,  
the bitterest  
she had known.

4. Then said Giaflaug,  
Giuki's sister:  
"I know myself to be  
on earth most joyless:  
of five consorts I  
the loss have suffered;  
of two daughters,  
sisters three,

and brothers eight;  
I alone live.”

5. Guðrún could not  
shed a tear,  
such was her affliction  
for her dead consort,  
and her soul’s anguish  
for the king’s fall.

6. Then said Herborg,  
Hunaland’s queen:  
“I a more cruel grief  
have to recount:  
my seven sons,  
in the south land,  
my spouse the eighth,  
in conflict fell.

7. My father and my mother,  
my brothers four,  
on the sea  
the wind deluded;  
the waves struck  
on the ship’s timbers.

8. Their last honours  
‘twas mine to pay,  
‘twas mine to see them tombed,  
their funeral rites  
to prepare was mine.  
All this I underwent  
in one half-year,  
and to me no one  
consolation offered.

9. Then I became a captive,  
taken in war,  
at the close  
of the same half-year.  
Then had I to adorn,  
and tie the shoes,



of the hersir's wife,  
each morn.

10. From jealousy  
she threatened me,  
and with hard blows  
drove me:  
nowhere master  
found I a better,  
but mistress  
no where a worse."

11. Gudrún could not  
shed a tear,  
such was her affliction  
for her dead consort,  
and her soul's anguish  
for the king's fall.

12. Then said Gullrönd,  
Guiki's daughter:  
"Little canst thou, my fosterer,  
wise as thou art,  
with a young wife  
fittingly talk."  
The king's body she forbade  
to be longer hidden.

13. She snatched the sheet  
from Sigurd's corse,  
and turned his cheek  
towards his wife's knees:  
"Behold thy loved one,  
lay thy mouth to his lip,  
as if thou wouldst embrace  
the living prince."

14. Gudrún upon him  
cast one look:  
she saw the prince's locks  
dripping with blood,  
the chief's sparking eyes

closed in death,  
 his kingly breast  
 cleft by the sword.

15. Then sank down Gudrún  
 back on her pillow,  
 her head-gear was loosed,  
 her cheeks grew red,  
 and a flood of tears  
 fell to her knees.

16. Then wept Gudrún,  
 Giuki's daughter,  
 so that the tears  
 spontaneously flowed,  
 and at the same time screamed  
 the geese in the court,  
 the noble birds,  
 which the lady owned.

17. Then spake Gullrönd  
 Giuki's daughter:  
 "Your loves I know  
 were the most ardent  
 among living beings  
 upon earth:  
 thou hadst delight nowhere,  
 sister mine!  
 save with Sigurd."

18. Then said Gudrún,  
 Giuki's daughter:  
 "Such was my Sigurd  
 among Giuki's sons,  
 as is the garlick  
 out from the grass which grows,  
 or a bright stone  
 on a thread drawn,  
 a precious gem  
 on kings.

19. I also seemed  
to the prince's warriors  
higher than any  
of Herian's Disir;  
now I am as little  
as the leaf oft is  
in the storm-winds,  
after the chieftain's death.

20. Sitting I miss,  
and in my bed,  
my dearest friend.  
Giuki's sons have caused,  
Giuki's sons have caused  
my affliction,  
and their sister's  
tears of anguish.

21. So ye desolate  
the people's land,  
as ye have kept  
your sworn oaths.  
Gunnar! thou wilt not  
the gold enjoy;  
those rings will  
be thy bane,  
for the oaths thou  
to Sigurd gavest.

22. Oft in the mansion was  
the greater mirth,  
when my Sigurd  
Grani saddled,  
and Brynhild  
they went to woo,  
that witch accursed,  
in an evil hour!"

23. Then said Brynhild,  
Budli's daughter:  
"May the hag lack  
spouse and children,

who thee, Guðrún!  
has caused to weep,  
and this morning  
given the runes of speech!”<sup>1</sup>

24. Then said Gullrönd,  
Giuki’s daughter:  
“Cease, thou loathed of all!  
from those words.  
The evil destiny of princes  
thou hast ever been;  
thee every billow drives  
of an evil nature;  
thou sore affliction  
of seven kings,  
the greatest bane of friendship  
among women!”

25. Then said Brynhild,  
Budli’s daughter:  
“Atli my brother,  
Budli’s offspring,  
is the sole cause  
of all the evil;

26. When in the hall  
of the Hunnish folk,  
with the king we beheld  
the fire of the serpent’s bed.<sup>2</sup>  
Of that journey,  
I have paid the penalty,  
that sight  
I have ever rued.”

27. She by a column stood,  
the wood violently clasped.  
From the eyes of Brynhild,  
Budli’s daughter,  
fire gleamed forth;

1. Power of speech.

2. A periphrasis of gold.

venom she snorted,  
when she beheld  
the wounds of Sigurd.

Guðrún then went away to the forest and deserts, and travelled to Denmark, where she stayed seven half-years with Thora, Hakon's daughter. Brynhild would not outlive Sigurd. She caused her eight thralls and five female slaves to be killed, and then slew herself with a sword, as it is related in the *Sigurðarkviða in Skemma* (*the Short Lay of Sigurd*).



## Helreið Brynhildar: Brynhild's Hel-ride.

After Brynhild's death two piles were made, one for Sigurd, which was the first burnt; but Brynhild was burnt afterwards, and she was in a chariot, which was hung with precious tapestry; so that it was said that Brynhild drove in a chariot on the way to Hel, and passed through a place: in which a giantess dwelt. The giantess said:

1. "Thou shalt not  
pass through  
my stone-supported  
dwelling-place.  
Better had it beseemed thee  
to work broidery,  
than to seek after  
another's husband.

2. Why dost thou,  
vagrant woman!  
from Valland,  
my dwelling visit?  
Thou hast, golden dame!  
if thou desirest to know,  
gentle one! from thy hands  
washed human blood."

Brynhild  
3. "Upbraid me not,  
woman of the rock!  
although I have  
in warfare been.  
Of us, I trow,  
I shall the better seem,  
wherever men  
our conditions know."

Giantess

4. "Thou, Brynhild!  
Budli's daughter!  
wast in evil hour  
born in the world;  
thou hast been the bane  
of Giuki's children,  
and their happy  
house subverted."

Brynhild

5. "From my chariot I  
will truly tell thee,  
thou witless crone!  
if thou desirest to know,  
how Giuki's heirs  
made me both  
lovelorn  
and perjured.

6. The bold-hearted king<sup>1</sup>  
caused the garbs  
of us eight sisters  
under an oak to be borne.  
Twelve years old was I,  
if thou desirest to know,  
when to the youthful king  
oaths I gave.

7. By all in Hlymdalir  
I was called  
Hild with the helm,  
by all who knew me.

8. Then caused I next,  
in the Gothic realm,  
the old Hiálmgunnar  
to Hel to journey:  
I gave victory to

1. By depriving them of swan-plumage, for they were Valkyriur like the wives of Volund and his brothers, Agnar reduced them under his subjection.



the youthful  
 brother of Öda,  
 whereat Odin became  
 hostile to me.

9. He with shields encompassed me,  
 red and white,  
 in Skatalund;  
 their surfaces enclosed me;  
 him he ordained  
 my sleep to break,  
 who in no place  
 could be made to fear.

10. He made around my hall,  
 towards the south,  
 towering burn  
 the destroyer of all wood:  
 then bade that man only  
 over it to ride,  
 who me the gold should bring,  
 that under Fafnir lay.

11. On Grani rode the chief,  
 the gold-disperser,  
 to where my foster-father  
 ruled o'er the dwellings.  
 He alone seemed there  
 to all superior,  
 the Danish warrior,  
 of the court.

12. We slept and were content  
 in the same bed,  
 as if he had  
 my born brother been;  
 neither of us might  
 on the other,  
 for eight nights,  
 lay a hand.

13. Reproached me Gudrún,  
Giuki's daughter,  
that I had slept  
in Sigurd's arms;  
then was I made aware  
of what I fain would not,  
that they had deceived me,  
when a mate I took.

14. To calamities  
all too lasting  
men and women ever will  
be while living born.  
We two shall now,  
Sigurd and I,  
pass our life together.  
Sink thou of giant-kind!"

## **Drap Niflunga: The Slaughter of the Niflungs.**

Gunnar and Högni then took all the gold, Fafnir's heritage. Dissension prevailed afterwards between the Giúkungs and Atli. He charged them with being the cause of Brynhild's death. By way of reconciliation, it was agreed that they should give him Gudrún in marriage, to whom they administered an oblivious potion, before she would consent to espouse Atli. Atli had two sons, Erp and Eitil, but Svanhild was the daughter of Sigurd and Gudrún. King Atli invited Gunnar and Högni to his residence, and sent to them Vingi, or Knefröd. Gudrún was aware of the treachery, and sent them word in runes not to come; and to Högni, as a token, she sent the ring Andvaranaut, in which she had tied some wolf's hair. Gunnar had sought the hand of Oddrún, Atli's sister, but did not obtain it. He then married Glaumvör, and Högni took Kostbera to wife. Their sons were Sólar, Snævar, and Giúki. When the Giúkungs came to Atli, Gudrún besought his sons to intercede for their lives, but they would not. The heart of Högni was cut out, and Gunnar was cast into a pen of serpents. He struck his harp and lulled the serpents, but an adder stung him in the liver.



## Guðrúnarkviða Önnur: The Second Lay of Guðrún

King Theodric was with Atli, and had there lost the greater number of his men. Theodric and Guðrún mutually bewailed their afflictions. She related to him and said:

1. A maid above all maids I was;  
my mother reared me  
bright in her bower;  
my brothers I much loved,  
until me Giúki,  
with gold adorned,  
with gold adorned,  
to Sigurd gave.

2. Such as Sigurd  
above Giúki's sons,  
as the green leek is,  
springing from the grass,  
or the high-limbed hart  
above the savage beasts,  
or the gleed-red gold  
above grey silver.

3. Until my brothers  
the possession grudged me  
of a consort  
to all superior.  
They could not sleep,  
nor on affairs deliberate,  
before they Sigurd  
had caused to die.

4. Grani to the assembly ran,  
his tramp was to be heard;  
but Sigurd then  
himself came not.  
All the saddle-beasts  
were splashed with blood,  
and with sweating faint,  
from the murderers.

5. Weeping I went  
to talk to Grani,  
with humid cheeks,  
I prayed the steed to tell:  
then Grani shuddered,  
in the grass bowed down his head.  
The steed knew  
that his master was no more.

6. Long I wandered,  
long was my mind distracted,  
ere of the people's guardian  
I inquired for my king.

7. Gunnar hung his head,  
but Högni told me  
of Sigurd's cruel death.  
"Beyond the river  
slaughtered lies  
Guthorm's murderer,  
and to the wolves given.

8. Yonder beyond Sigurd,  
towards the south,  
there thou wilt hear  
the ravens croak,  
the eagles scream,  
in their feast exulting;  
the wolves howling  
round thy consort."

9. "Why wilt thou, Högni!  
to a joyless being  
such miseries recount?  
May thy heart by ravens  
be torn and scattered  
over the wide world,  
rather than thou shouldst  
walk with men."

10. Högni answered,  
for once cast down,  
from his cheerful mood  
by intense trouble:  
“Guðrún! thou wouldst have  
greater cause to weep,  
if the ravens  
should tear my heart.”

11. Alone I turned  
from that interview  
to the wolves’  
scattered leavings.  
No sigh I uttered,  
nor with my hands beat,  
nor wailed,  
as other women,  
when I heart-broken sat  
by Sigurd.

12. Night seemed to me  
of blackest darkness,  
when I sorrowing sat  
by Sigurd.  
Better by far  
it seemed to me  
had the wolves  
taken my life,  
or I had been burnt  
as a birchen tree.

13. From the fell I journeyed  
five long days and nights,  
until the lofty hall  
of Hálf I recognized.  
Seven half-years  
I with Thora stayed,  
Hákon’s daughter,  
in Denmark.

14. She for my solace  
wrought in gold  
southern halls,  
and Danish swans.

15. We had in pictures  
the game of warriors,  
and in handiworks  
a prince's nobles;  
red shields,  
Hunnish heroes,  
a sworded host, a helmed host,  
a prince's following.

16. Sigmund's ships  
from the land sailing,  
with gilded heads,  
and carved prows.  
We on our canvas wrought  
how Sigar and Siggeir  
both contended  
southward in Fyen.

17. When Grimhild,  
the Gothic woman,  
heard how greatly  
I was affected,  
she cast aside her needlework,  
and her sons called  
oft and earnestly,  
that she might know,  
who for her son would  
their sister compensate,  
or for her consort slain  
the blood-fine pay?

18. Gunnar was ready  
gold to offer,  
for the injuries to atone,  
and Högni also.

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*



She then inquired  
 who would go  
 the steeds to saddle,  
 the chariot to drive,  
 on horseback ride,  
 the hawk let fly,  
 arrows shoot  
 from the yew bow?

19. Valdar and the Danes  
 with Jarizleif,  
 Eymód the third  
 with Jarizkar,  
 then entered,  
 to princes like.  
 Red mantles had  
 the Langbard's men,  
 corslets ornamented,  
 towering helms;  
 girded they were with falchions,  
 brown were their locks.

20. For me each one would choose  
 precious gifts,  
 precious gifts,  
 and to my heart would speak,  
 if for my many woes  
 they might  
 gain my confidence,  
 and I would in them trust.

21. Grimhild to me brought  
 a potion to drink  
 cold and bitter,  
 that I my injuries might forget;  
 it was mingled  
 with Urd's power,  
 with cold sea-water,  
 and with Són's blood.

22. In that horn were  
 characters of every kind  
 graven and red-hued;  
 nor could I comprehend them:  
 the long lyng-fish<sup>1</sup>  
 of the Haddings' land,  
 an uncut ear of corn:  
 the wild-beasts' entrance.

23. In that potion were  
 many ills together,  
 a herb from every wood,  
 and the acorn,  
 the fire-stead's dew,<sup>2</sup>  
 entrails of offerings,  
 swine's liver seethed;  
 for that deadens strife.

24. And then I forgot,  
 when I had taken it,  
 all the king's words  
 in the hall spoken.  
 There to my feet  
 three kings came,  
 before she herself  
 sought to speak with me.

25. "Gudrún! I will give thee  
 gold to possess,  
 of all the riches much  
 of thy dead father;  
 rings of red gold,  
 Hlödver's halls,  
 all the hangings  
 left by the fallen king.

1. That is the long fish of the heath, or ling, a snake or serpent.

2. Soot.

26. Hunnish maids,  
those who weave tapestry,  
and in bright gold work,  
so that I may delight thee.  
Over Budli's wealth  
thou alone shalt rule,  
adorned with gold,  
and given to Atli."

27. "I will not  
have any man,  
nor Brynhild's  
brother marry:  
it beseems me not  
with Budli's son  
to increase a race,  
or life enjoy."

28. "Take care not to pay  
the chiefs with hate;  
for 'tis we who have  
been the aggressors:  
so shouldst thou act  
as if yet lived  
Sigurd and Sigmund,  
if sons thou bearest."

29. "Grimhild! I cannot  
in mirth indulge,  
nor, for my hero's sake,  
cherish a hope,  
since the bloodthirsty (wolf and) raven  
have together  
cruelly drunk  
my Sigurd's heart's blood."

30. “Him<sup>3</sup> of all  
 I have found to be  
 a king of noblest race,  
 and in much most excellent:  
 him shalt thou have  
 until age lays thee low,  
 or mateless be,  
 if him thou wilt not take.”

31. “Cease to offer  
 that cup of ills  
 so pertinaciously,  
 that race to me:  
 he will Gunnar’s  
 destruction perpetrate,  
 and will cut out  
 Högni’s heart.  
 I will not cease  
 until the exulting  
 strife-exciter’s life  
 I shall have taken.”

32. Weeping Grimhild  
 caught the words,  
 by which to her sons  
 Gudrún forboded evil,  
 and to her kindred  
 dire misfortunes.  
 “Lands I will also give thee,  
 people and followers,  
 Vinbiörg and Valbiörg,  
 if thou wilt accept them;  
 for life possess them,  
 and be happy, daughter!”

33. “Him then I will choose,  
 among the kings,  
 and from my relatives  
 reluctantly receive him.  
 Never will he be to me

a welcome consort,  
 nor my brothers' bale  
 a protection to our sons."

34. Forthwith on horseback was  
 each warrior to be seen;  
 but the Walish women  
 were in chariots placed.  
 For seven days  
 o'er a cold land we rode;  
 but the second seven,  
 we beat the waves;  
 and the third seven,  
 we reached dry land.

35. There the gate-wards  
 of the lofty burgh  
 the latticed entrance opened,  
 ere the court we entered.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

36. Atli waked me,  
 but I seemed to be  
 full of evil thoughts,  
 for my kinsmen's death.

37. "So me just now<sup>4</sup>  
 have the Norns waked,  
 a grateful interpretation  
 I fain would have.  
 Methought that thou, Gudrún!  
 Giuki's daughter!  
 with a treacherous sword  
 didst pierce me through."

38. "Fire it forebodes,<sup>5</sup>  
 when one of iron dreams,  
 arrogance and pleasure,

4. Atli speaks.

5. Gudrun answers.

a woman's anger.  
 Against evil  
 I will go burn thee,  
 cure and medicate thee,  
 although to me thou art hateful.”

39. “Seemed to me here in the garden<sup>6</sup>  
 that young shoots had fallen,  
 which I wished  
 to let grow:  
 torn up with their roots  
 reddened with blood,  
 to table were they brought,  
 and offered me to eat.

40. Seemed to me that hawks  
 flew from my hand,  
 lacking their quarry,  
 to the house of woes;  
 seemed to me I ate  
 their hearts with honey  
 swollen with blood,  
 with sorrowing mind.

41. Seemed to me from my hand  
 whelps I let slip;  
 lacking cause of joy,  
 both of them howled:  
 seemed to me their bodies  
 became dead carcasses:  
 of the carrion  
 I was compelled to eat.”

42. “There will warriors<sup>7</sup>  
 round thy couch converse,  
 and of the white-locked ones  
 take off the head;  
 death-doomed they are  
 within a few nights,  
 a little ere day:  
 thy court will eat of them.”

6. Atli speaks.

7. Gudrun answers.

43. "Lie down I would not,<sup>8</sup>  
nor sleep after,  
obstinate in my fate  
That I will execute!"

8. Atli speaks.





## Guðrunarkviða Þriðja: The Third Lay of Guðrún

Atli had a serving-woman named Herkia<sup>1</sup>, who had been his concubine. She informed Atli that she had seen Thiodrek and Guðrún together; whereat Atli was much afflicted. Then Guðrún said:

1. What ails thee ever, Atli!  
Budli's son!  
Hast thou sorrow in thy heart?  
Why never laughest thou?  
To thy jarls it would  
seem more desirable,  
that thou with men wouldst talk,  
and on me wouldst look.

Atli  
2. It grieves me, Guðrún!  
Giuki's daughter!  
that in my palace here,  
Herkia has said,  
that thou and Thiodrek have  
under one covering slept,  
and wantonly  
been in the linen wrapt.

Guðrún  
3. For all this charge  
I will give my oaths  
by the white  
sacred stone,  
that with me and Thiodrek  
nothing has passed,  
which to man and wife  
only belongs;

1. Herkia, the Erka or Helche of the German tradition, who here appears as a slave or servant, is, according to that tradition, the queen of Etzel or Atli, who did not marry Kreimhilt (Guðrun) until after her death. The falsification of the story, the pitiful subordinate part acted by Thiodrek, the perfect silence of all the other poems on this event, and the ordeal of the cauldron, sufficiently show that the poem is a later composition. P. E. Muller (II., p. 319) ascribes it to Sæmund himself.

4. Save that I embraced  
the prince of armies,  
the honoured king,  
a single time.  
Other were  
our cogitations,  
when sorrowful we two  
sat to converse.

5. Hither came Thiodrek,  
with thirty warriors;  
now there lives not one  
of those thirty men.  
Surround me with thy brothers,  
and with mailed warriors;  
surround me with all  
thy noblest kinsmen.

6. Send to Saxi  
the Southmen's prince,  
he can hallow  
the boiling cauldron."

7. Seven hundred men  
entered the hall,  
ere in the cauldron  
the queen dipt her hand.

8. "Now Gunnar comes not,  
nor call I Högni:  
I shall not see again  
my loved brothers:  
with his sword would Högni  
such wrong avenge:  
now I must myself  
purify from crime."

9. She to the bottom plunged  
her snow-white hand,  
and up she drew  
the precious stones.<sup>2</sup>  
“See now, ye men!  
I am proved guiltless  
in holy wise,  
boil the vessel as it may.”

10. Laughed then Atli's  
heart within his breast,  
when he unscathed beheld  
the hands of Gudrún.  
“Now must Herkia  
to the cauldron go,  
she who Gudrún  
had hoped to injure.”  
No one has misery seen  
who saw not that,  
how the hand there  
of Herkia was burnt.  
They then the woman led  
to a foul slough.<sup>3</sup>  
So were Gudrún's  
wrongs avenged.

2. The iarknastein of the original was a milk-white opal.

3. This punishment was known to the old Germans.



## Oddrúnargrátr: Oddrún's Lament

There was a King named Heidrek, who had a daughter named Borgný. Her lover was named Vil-mund. She could not give birth to a child until Oddrún, Atli's sister, came. She had been the beloved of Gunnar, Giuki's son. Of this story it is here sung:

1. I have heard tell,  
in ancient storied  
how a damsel came  
to the eastern land:  
no one was able,  
on the face of earth,  
help to afford  
to Heidrek's daughter.

2. When Oddrún,  
Atli's sister, heard  
that the damsel  
had great pains,  
from the stall she led  
her well-bridled steed,  
and on the swart one  
the saddle laid.

3. She the horse made run  
on the smooth, dusty way,  
until she came  
to where a high hall stood.  
She the saddle snatched  
from the hungry steed,  
and in she went  
along the court,  
and these words  
first of all she uttered:

4. "What is most noteworthy  
in this country?  
or what most desirable  
in the Hunnish land?"

Borgný

5. Here lies Borgný  
with pains o'erwhlemed,  
thy friend, Oddrún!  
See if thou canst help her.

Oddrún

6. What chieftain has on thee  
brought this dishonour?  
Why so acute  
are Borgný's pains?

Borgný

7. Vilmund is named  
the falcon-bearers' friend:  
he the damsel wrapt  
in a warm coverlet  
five whole winters,  
so that from her father she was hidden.

8. They, I ween, spoke not  
more than this:  
kindly she went to sit  
at the damsel's knee.  
Vehemently sang Oddrún,  
fervently sang Oddrún  
songs of power  
over Borgný.

9. A girl and boy might then  
tread the mould-way,  
gentle babes,  
born of Högni's bane.  
Then began to speak  
the death-sick damsel,  
who before had  
no word uttered.

10. "So may thee help  
the benignant genii,  
Frigg and Freyja,  
and other gods besides,  
as thou hast from me  
peril removed!"

11. "I was not inclined  
to give thee help,  
because thou never wast  
of succour worthy:  
I vowed, and have performed  
what I then said  
when the princes  
the heritage divided,  
that I would ever  
help afford."

Borgný

12. Mad art thou, Oddrún!  
and hast lost thy wits,  
when in hostile spirit  
most of thy words thou utterest;  
for I have been thy companion  
upon the earth,  
as if from brothers  
we both were born.

Oddrún

13. I remember yet  
what thou one evening saidst,  
when I for Gunnar,  
a computation made.  
Such a case, saidst thou,  
would not thenceforth happen  
to any maiden,  
save to me alone."

14. Then sat down  
the sorrowing lady  
to tell her woes,  
for her great grief:

15. "I was nurtured  
in the kingly hall,  
I was the joy of many  
in the council of men.  
Life I enjoyed,  
and my father's wealth,  
five winters only,  
while my father lived.

16. These last words  
the noble-hearted king  
strove to utter,  
ere he departed hence.

17. He bade me be endowed  
with ruddy gold,  
and in the south be given  
to Grimhild's son.  
He said no maiden  
could more excellent  
in the world be born,  
if fate willed it not otherwise.

18. Brynhild in her bower  
was occupied to broidery:  
she had people  
and lands around her.  
Earth slumbered,  
and the heavens above,  
when Fafnir's bane  
her burgh first saw.

19. Then was conflict waged  
with the Walish sword,  
and the burgh taken  
which Brynhild owned.  
It was not long  
which was not surprising  
ere she discovered  
all those frauds.



20. These she caused  
cruelly to be avenged,  
so that we all have  
great afflictions.  
Know it will be  
through every land of men,  
that she caused herself to die  
with Sigurd.

21. But I for Gunnar,  
rings' dispenser,  
love conceived,  
such as Brynhild should.  
But he Brynhild bade  
a helmet take,  
said she a Valkyria  
should become.

22. They forthwith offered<sup>1</sup>  
ruddy rings  
to my brother,  
and indemnity not small.  
He<sup>2</sup> besides offered for me  
fifteen vills,  
and the load of Grani's sides,  
if he would accept them.

23. But Atli said  
he never would  
a marriage-gift receive  
from Giuki's son.  
Still we could not  
our loves withstand,  
but I my head must lay  
upon the ring-breaker.

1. For Brynhild's death.

2. Gunnar.

24. Many things said  
 my relations;  
 declared they had surprised us  
 both together;  
 but Atli said,  
 that I would not  
 crime commit,  
 nor scandal perpetrate.  
 But such should no one  
 ever deny,  
 when love has part.

25. Atli sent  
 his emissaries  
 about the Murk-wood,  
 that he might prove me;  
 and they came to where  
 they ought not to have come,  
 to where we had  
 one couch prepared.

26. To the men we offered  
 red-gold rings,  
 that they it might not  
 to Atli tell;  
 but they forthwith  
 hastened home,  
 and it quickly  
 to Atli told.

27. But they from Gudrún  
 carefully concealed it,  
 yet rather by half  
 she should have known it.<sup>3</sup>  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

28. A sound was heard  
 of gold-shod hoofs,  
 when into the court  
 rode Giuki's heirs.

3. From here the narrative appears to be very fragmentary.

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 Of Högni they  
 the heart cut out,  
 and into a serpent-pen  
 the other cast.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

29. I had gone  
 yet once again  
 to Geirmund,  
 to prepare a banquet.  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

The brave king began<sup>4</sup>  
 the harp to sound;  
 for the prince of noble race  
 hoped that I  
 to his aid might come.

30. I it heard  
 from Hlesey,  
 how of trouble there  
 the harp-strings sang.

31. I my thralls bade  
 all be ready;  
 I the prince's  
 life would save.  
 The vessel we let float  
 past the forest,<sup>5</sup>  
 until I saw  
 all Atli's courts.

4. Gunnar while in the serpent-pen.

5. For *lund* (*forest, wood*), which is the reading of the MSS., the Copenhagen editor favours the correction to *sund* (a *sound* or *straight, the Sound*)?

32. Then came Atli's  
miserable mother  
crawling forth:  
may she perish!  
she Gunnar  
pierced to the heart;  
so that the hero  
I could not save.

33. Oftentimes I wonder,  
woman gold-adorned!<sup>6</sup>  
how I after can  
life retain;  
for I seemed  
the formidable  
sword-dispenser  
as myself to love:

34. Thou sitst and listenest,  
while I recount to thee  
many and evil fate,  
my own and theirs.”  
Each one lives  
as he best may.  
Now is ended  
Oddrún's lament.

## Atlakviða: The Lay of Atli

Gudrún, Giuki's daughter, avenged her brothers, as is well known. She first killed Atli's sons, and afterwards Atli himself, and burnt the palace with all the household. On these events was this lay composed.

1. Atli sent riding  
a messenger to Gunnar,  
a crafty man,  
Knefrud was his name.  
To Giuki's courts he came,  
and to Gunnar's hall,  
to the seats of state,<sup>1</sup>  
and the glad potation:
  
2. There drank the courtiers  
wine in their Valhall  
but the guileful ones<sup>2</sup> silence kept  
the Huns' wrath they<sup>3</sup> feared.  
Then said Knefrud,  
with chilling voice:  
the southern warrior  
on a high bench sat
  
3. "Atli has sent me hither  
on his errand riding  
on a bit-gripping steed,  
through the unknown Myrkwood,  
to pray you, Gunnar!  
that to his bench ye come,  
with helms of state,  
Atli's home to visit.

1. The epithet *aringreypr* is applied both to benches and helmets (see Strophes 3 and 16). Its meaning is doubtful: it has been rendered *iron-bound*, *brass-bound*, *hearth-encircling*, *curved like an eagle's beak*, etc. Benches and helmets of ceremony are evidently intended, probably ornamented with brass-work or figures of eagles. But to whichever substantive applied, I take its meaning to be the same.

2. The messengers of Atli.

3. The Giukings.

4. Shields ye there can choose,  
 and smooth-shaven spears,  
 gold-red helms,  
 and of Huns a multitude,  
 silver-gilt saddle-cloths,  
 sarks gory-red,  
 the dart's obstruction,  
 and bit-gripping steeds.

5. The plain he will also give you,  
 the broad Gnítaheid,  
 whistling javelins,  
 and gilded prows,  
 vast treasures,  
 and Danp's towns,  
 with that famed forest,  
 which men the Murkwood call."

6. Gunnar his head then turned,  
 and to Högni said:  
 "What counselest thou, bold warrior?"  
 now suchlike we hear?  
 Of no gold I knew  
 on Gníta's heath,  
 to which we possess not  
 other equal.

7. Seven halls have we  
 filled with swords,  
 of each of which  
 the hilt is gold.  
 My horse I know the best,  
 and my sword the keenest;  
 my bow adorns my seat,  
 my corslets are of gold,  
 my helm and shield the brightest,  
 brought from the hall of Kiar:  
 mine alone are better  
 than all the Hunnish ones.

8. What thinkest thou the woman<sup>4</sup> means,  
 by sending us a ring  
 in a wolf's clothing wrapt?  
 I think that she caution enjoins.  
 Wolf's hair I found  
 twined in the red-gold ring:  
 wolfish is the way  
 we on our errand ride.”

9. No sons persuaded Gunnar,  
 nor other kinsman,  
 interpreters nor counsellors,  
 nor those who potent were.  
 Then spake Gunnar,  
 as beseemed a king,  
 great in his mead-hall,  
 from his large soul:

10. “Rise now up, Fiörnir!  
 let along the benches pass  
 the golden cups of heroes,  
 from the attendants' hands.

11. The wolf shall rule  
 the Niflungs' heritage,  
 O bearded sages!  
 if Gunnar perish;  
 black-coated bears  
 earth's fruit tear with their teeth,  
 to the dogs' delight,  
 if Gunnar come not back.”

12. Honoured men,  
 weeping led  
 the land's ruler  
 from the Huns' court.  
 Then said Högni's  
 youthful heir:  
 “Go now, prudent and prosperous,  
 whither your wishes lead.”

4. Gudrun: she had sent, by Atli's messengers, a ring to her brothers, as a warning, in which a wolf's hair was entwined, together with a note in runes, which were falsified by Vingi.

13. The warriors made  
 their bit-gripping steeds  
 over the mountains fly,  
 through the unknown Murkwood.  
 The whole Hunnish forest trembled  
 where'er the warriors rode;  
 over the shrubless, all-green plains  
 they sped.

14. Atli's land they saw,  
 and the high watch-towers;  
 Bikki's people stood  
 on that lofty fortress;  
 the south people's hall  
 was round with benches set,  
 with well-bound bucklers,  
 and white shields,  
 the javelin's obstruction.  
 There Atli drank  
 wine in his Valhall:  
 his guards sat without,  
 Gunnar and his men to watch,  
 lest they there should come  
 with yelling dart,  
 to excite their prince to conflict.

15. Their sister forthwith saw,  
 when the hall they had entered,  
 her brothers both  
 beer had she little drunken  
 "Betrayed art thou now Gunnar!  
 though strong, how wilt thou contend  
 with the Huns' deadly wiles?  
 Go quickly from this hall!

16. Better hadst thou, Gunnar!  
 in corslet come,  
 than with helm of state,  
 to see the home of Atli;  
 thou in the saddle wouldst have sat  
 whole sun-bright days,  
 and o'er the pallid dead



let the Norns weep,  
 the Hunnish shield-maids  
 misery suffer;  
 but Atli himself thou shouldst  
 into the serpent-pen have cast;  
 but now the serpent-pen  
 is for you two reserved.”

17. “Sister! ‘tis now too late  
 the Niflungs to assemble,  
 long ‘tis to seek  
 the aid of men,  
 of valiant heroes,  
 over the rugged fells of Rhine.”

18. Then the Burgundians’ friends<sup>5</sup>  
 Gunnar seized,  
 in fetters laid,  
 and him fast bound.

19. Högni hewed down seven,  
 with the keen sword,  
 but the eighth he thrust  
 into the raging fire.  
 So should a valiant man  
 defend himself from foes.

20 Högni had Gunnar’s  
 hands<sup>6</sup> protected.  
 The bold chief they asked,  
 if the Goths’ lord  
 would with gold  
 his life redeem?  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

21. “Högnis heart  
 in my hand shall lie,  
 cut bloody from the breast  
 of the valiant chief,

5. Atli’s men.

6. That is Gunnar himself.

the king's son,  
 with a dull-edged knife.”  
 \*\*\*\*\*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

They the heart cut out  
 from Hialli's breast;  
 on a dish bleeding laid it,  
 and to Gunnar bare.

23. Then said Gunnar,  
 lord of men:  
 “Here have I the heart  
 of the timid Hialli,  
 unlike the heart  
 of the bold Högni;  
 for much it trembles  
 as in the dish it lies:  
 it trembled more by half,  
 while in his breast it lay.”

24. Högni laughed,  
 when to his heart they cut  
 the living crest-crasher;  
 no lament uttered he.  
 All bleeding on a dish they laid it,  
 and it to Gunnar bare.

25. Calmly said Gunnar,  
 the warrior Niflung:  
 “Here have I the heart  
 of the bold Högni,  
 unlike the heart  
 of the timid Hialli;  
 for it little trembles,  
 as in the dish it lies:  
 it trembled less,  
 while in his breast it lay.

26. So far shalt thou, Atli!  
 be from the eyes of men  
 as thou wilt  
 from the treasures be.  
 In my power alone  
 is all the hidden  
 Niflungs' gold,  
 now that Högni lives not.

27. Ever was I wavering,  
 while we both lived;  
 now am I so no longer,  
 as I alone survive.  
 Rhine shall possess  
 men's baleful metal,  
 the mighty stream, the Ás-known  
 Niflungs' heritage.  
 In the rolling water  
 the choice rings shall glitter,  
 rather than on the hands  
 of the Huns' children shine.

28. Drive your wheel-chariots,  
 the captive is now in bonds."

29. Atli the mighty,  
 their sister's husband,  
 rode with resounding steeds,  
 with strife-thorns<sup>7</sup> surrounded.  
 Gudrún perceived  
 the heroes' peril  
 she from tears refrained,  
 on entering the hall of tumult.

30. "So be it with thee, Atli!  
 as toward Gunnar thou hast held  
 the oft-sworn oaths,  
 formerly taken  
 by the southward verging sun,  
 and by Sigtý's hill,

the secluded bed of rest,  
 and by Ullr's ring."<sup>7</sup>  
 Yet thence the more  
 did the bit-shaker<sup>8</sup>  
 the treasure's guardian,  
 the warrior chief,  
 drag to death.

31. The living prince  
 then did a host of men  
 into a pen cast down,  
 which was within  
 with serpents over-crawled.  
 But Gunnar there alone  
 a harp in wrathful mood  
 with his hand struck:  
 the strings resounded.  
 So should a daring chief,  
 a ring-dispenser,  
 gold from men withhold.

32. Atli turned  
 his brass-shod<sup>9</sup> steed,  
 his home to re-visit,  
 back from the murder.  
 Din was in the court  
 with horses thronged,  
 men's weapon-song,  
 from the heath they were come.

33. Out then went Guðrún,  
 Atli to meet,  
 with a golden cup to do  
 her duty to the king.  
 "Thou canst, o king!  
 joyful in thy hall  
 receive from Guðrún  
 the arms of the departed."

8. The horse.

9. The original word is *eyrskan*, a word of doubtful signification.

34. The drinking-cups of Atli  
groaned with wine heavy,  
when in the hall together  
the Huns were counted.  
Long-bearded, bold,  
the warriors entered.
35. Hastened the bright-faced dame  
to bear their potions to them,  
the wondrous lady to the chiefs;  
and reluctantly to the pallid Atli  
the festal dainties offered,  
and uttered words of hate.
36. “Thou, swords’ dispenser! hast  
thy two sons’ hearts,  
slaughter-gory,  
with honey eaten.  
I resolved that thou, bold chief!  
shouldst of a human dish  
eat at thy feasting,  
and to the place of honour send it.
37. Henceforth thou wilt not  
to thy knees call  
Erp and Eitil,  
joyous with beer the two:  
thou wilt not henceforth see them  
from thy middle seat,  
gold-dispersing,  
javelins shafting,  
manes clipping,  
or horses urging.”
38. Uproar was on the benches,  
portentous the cry of men,  
noise beneath the costly hangings.  
The children of the Huns wept,  
all wept save Gudrún,  
who never wept,  
or for her bear-fierce brothers,  
or her dear sons,

young, simple,  
whom she had borne to Atli.

39. Gold scattered  
the swan-fair dame;  
with ruddy rings  
the household gifted.  
Fate she let ripen,  
but the bright gold flow.  
The woman spared not  
the treasure-houses.

40. Atli incautious had  
himself drunk weary;  
weapon he had none,  
nor was 'gainst Gudrún guarded.  
Oft had their sport been better,  
when they lovingly  
embraced each other  
before the nobles.

41. With the sword's point she gave  
the bed of blood to drink  
with death-bent hand,  
and the dogs loosed,  
out at the hall-door drove them,  
and the lady wakened  
the household with burning brand.  
That vengeance she for her brothers took.

42. To fire she then gave all  
that were therein,  
and from her brothers' murder  
were from the dark den<sup>10</sup> returned.  
The old structures fell,  
the treasure-houses smoked,  
the Budlungs' dwelling.  
Burnt too were the shield-maids  
within, their lives cut short;  
in the raging fire they sank.

10. The serpent-pen.

43. Of this enough is said.  
No such woman will henceforth  
arms again bear,  
to avenge her brothers.  
That bright woman had  
to three kings of men  
the death-doom borne,  
before she died.

Yet more clearly is this told in *Atlamálum inum Groenlenzkum* (*the Groenland lay of Atli*).





# Atlamál in Groenlenzku

## The Groenland Lay of Atli

1. Of those misdeeds men have heard tell,  
when warriors of old  
a compact made,  
which by pledges they confirmed,  
a secret consultation held:  
terrible it was to them after,  
and to Giuki's sons likewise,  
who were betrayed.

2. The warriors' fate ripened,  
they were death-doomed:  
ill advised was Atli,  
though he possessed sagacity:  
he felled a mighty column,  
strove hardly against himself;  
with speed he messengers despatched,  
that his wife's brothers should come quickly.

3. Wise was the house-dame,  
prudently she thought;  
the words in order she had heard,  
that in secret they had said:  
the sage lady was at a loss:  
fain would she help them:  
they<sup>1</sup> o'er the sea must sail,  
but she herself could not go.

4. Runes she graved,  
Vingi them falsified,  
before he gave them from him;  
of ill he was the bearer.  
Then departed  
Atli's messengers,  
through the branched firth,  
for where the bold warriors dwelt.

1. The messengers.

5. They with beer were cheered,  
and fires they kindled,  
naught thought they of guile,  
when they were come;  
they the gifts accepted,  
which the prince sent them,  
and of no evil thought.

6. Then came Kostbera,  
she was Högni's wife,  
a woman greatly cautious,  
and them both greeted.  
Glad was also Glaumvör,  
Gunnar's consort,  
the prudent dame her duty forgot not,  
she to the guests' need attended.

7. Högni they home invited,  
if he would be pleased to go.  
Treachery was manifest,  
had they but reflected!  
Gunnar then promised,  
if only Högni would,  
but Högni refused  
what the other proposed.

8. The noble dames bore mead,  
of many things there was abundance,  
many horns passed round,  
until it seemed they had full drunken.

9. The household prepared their couches,  
as to them seemed best.  
Cunning was Kostbera,  
she could runes interpret;  
she the letters read  
by the bright fire;  
her tongue she had to guard  
between both her gums  
so perverted were they,  
it was difficult to understand them.

10. To their bed they went,  
 she and Högni.  
 The gentle lady dreamed,  
 and concealed it not,  
 to the prince wisely said it  
 as soon as she awoke.

11. "From home thou art going, Högni!  
 give ear to counsel;  
 few are fully prudent:  
 go another time.

12. I have the runes interpreted,  
 which thy sister graved:  
 that fair dame has not  
 this time invited thee.  
 At one thing I wonder most,  
 I cannot even conceive,  
 why so wise a woman  
 so confusedly should grave;  
 for it is so set down  
 as if it intimated  
 death to you both,  
 if you should straightway come.  
 Either she has left out a letter,  
 or others are the cause.<sup>2</sup>

13. "They are," said Högni, "all suspicious;  
 I have no knowledge of them,  
 nor will I into it inquire,  
 unless we have to make requital.  
 The king will gift us  
 with gleed-red gold.  
 I never fear,  
 though we may hear of terror."

2. It would seem that the original runes, as graved by Gudrun, had not been so completely erased as to leave no traces of them; but that they were still sufficiently legible to enable Kostbera to ascertain the real purport of the communication.

14. "Tottering ye will go,  
 if thitherward ye tend.  
 No kind entertainment there  
 will ye at this time find.  
 Högni! I have dreamed,  
 I will not conceal it:  
 in an evil hour ye will go,  
 or so at least I fear.

15. Methought thy coverlet was  
 with fire consumed;  
 that the towering flame  
 rushed through my dwelling."

Högni

16. "Here lie linen cloths,  
 which thou hadst little noticed:  
 these will quickly burn  
 where thou the coverlet sawest."

Kostbera

17. "Methought a bear came in,  
 and broke down the columns;  
 and so his talons shook,  
 that we were terror-stricken;  
 by his mouth held many of us,  
 so that we were helpless:  
 there, too, was a din  
 far from little."

Högni

18. "A tempest there will be  
 furious and sudden:  
 the white bear thou sawest  
 will be a storm from the east."

Kostbera

19. "Methought an eagle flew herein,  
 all through the house:  
 that will largely concern us.  
 He sprinkled all with blood:  
 from his threats I thought it

to be the 'ham'<sup>3</sup> of Atli.”

Högni

20. “We often slaughter largely,  
and then red we see:  
often are oxen meant,  
when we of eagles dream.  
Sound is the heart of Atli,  
dream thou as thou mayest.”  
With this they ended:  
all speeches have an end.  
\*\*\*\*\*

21. The high-born awoke,  
there the like befell:  
Glaumvör had perceived  
that her dreams were ill-boding,  
adverse to Gunnar's  
going to and fro.

22. “Methought a gallows was for thee erected,<sup>4</sup>  
thou wentest to be hanged,  
that serpents ate thee,  
that I inter'd thee living,  
that the Powers' dissolution came  
Divine thou what that portends.

23. Methought a bloody glove  
from thy sark was drawn  
ill 'tis such a dream  
to a consort to recount  
methought a lance was  
thrust through thy middle:  
wolves howled  
on every side.”

3. *Ham* (*hamr*, fem. *hamingja*) a gaurdian angel, an attendant spirit.

4. Here a gallows in our sense of the word, but usually a stake on a scaffold, to which the condemned to a death of torture was bound hand and foot.

Gunnar

24. "Where dogs run  
they are wont to bark:  
oft bodes the bay of dogs  
the flight of javelins."

Glaumvör

25. "Methought a river ran herein,  
through the whole house,  
that it roared violently,  
rushed o'er the benches,  
brake the feet of you  
brothers twain;  
nothing the water spared:  
something will that portend!

26. Methought dead women  
in the night came hither;  
not ill-clad were they:  
they would choose thee,  
forthwith invited thee  
to their seats.  
I ween thy Dísir  
have forsaken thee."

Gunnar

27. "Too late it is to speak,  
it is now so resolved;  
from the journey we shall not shrink,  
as it is decreed to go:  
very probable it seems  
that our lives will be short."  
\*\*\*\*\*

28. When colours were discernible,  
those on journey bent  
all rose up:  
the others fain would stay them.  
The five journeyed together,  
of 'hús-carls' there were present  
twice that number.  
It was ill devised

Snævar and Sólar,  
 they were Högni's sons;  
 Orkning he was named,  
 who them accompanied,  
 a gentle shield-bearer was he,  
 the brother of Högni's wife.

29. They went fair-appointed,  
 until the firth them parted:  
 ever would their wives have stayed them,  
 they would not be stayed.

30. Glaumvör then spake,  
 Gunnar's consort,  
 Vingi she addressed,  
 as to her seemed fitting:  
 "I know not whether ye will requite us  
 as we would:  
 with treachery came the guest,  
 if aught of ill betide."

31. Then Vingi swore,  
 little spared he himself:  
 "May him the Jötuns have,  
 if towards you he lies!  
 the gallows hold him,  
 if aught against peace he meditates!"

32. Bera took up the word,  
 she of gentle soul:  
 "Sail ye prosperous,  
 and may success attend you:  
 may it be as I pray,  
 and it nothing hinder!"

33. Högni answered  
 he to his kin meant well  
 "Be of good cheer, ye prudent!  
 whatever may befall.  
 Many say the same,  
 though with great difference;  
 for many little care  
 how they depart from home."

34. On each other then they looked  
before they parted:  
then, I ween, their fates were severed,  
and their ways divided.

35. Vigorously they rowed,  
their bark was well nigh riven;  
backward bending the waves they beat,  
ardently plied:  
their oar-bands were broken,  
the rowlocks shattered.<sup>5</sup>

36. A little after  
I will the end relate  
they saw the mansion stand  
that Budli had possessed.  
Loud creaked the latticed gates,  
when Högni knocked.

37. Then said Vingi,  
what he had better not,  
“Go far from the house,  
‘tis perilous to enter;  
I quickly enticed you to perdition;  
ye shall forthwith be slain.  
With fair words I prayed your coming,  
though guile was under them.  
But just bide here,  
while a gallows I prepare.”

38. Högni answered  
little thought he of yielding,  
or of aught fearful  
that was to be proved:  
“Think not to frighten us;  
try that seldom.  
If one word thou addest,  
thou wilt thy harm prolong.”

5. So great was their haste to land.



39. They rushed on Vingi,  
and struck him dead,  
laid on their axes,  
while life within him throbbed.

40. Atli his men assembled,  
in their byrnies they issued forth,  
went prepared so  
that a fence was between them.  
Words they bandied,  
all with rags boiling:  
“Already had we resolved  
to take your lives away.”

Högni  
41. “It looks but ill,  
if ye before have counseled:  
e'en now ye are unprepared,  
and we one have felled,  
smitten to death:  
one of your host was he.”

42. Furious they became,  
when those words they heard;  
their fingers they stretched forth,  
and their bow-strings seized;  
sharply shot,  
and with shields themselves protected.

43. In then came the tale  
of what without was passing;  
loud before the hall  
they a thrall heard speak.

44. Then incensed was Gudrún,  
when the sad news she heard:  
adorned with necklaces,  
she tore them all asunder;  
so hurled the silver,  
that the rings in shivers flew.

45. Then she went out,  
not gently moved the doors;  
went forth void of fear,  
and the comers hailed,  
turned to the Niflungs:  
that was her last greeting,  
truth attended it;  
more words she said:

46. "I sought by symbols  
to prevent your leaving home,  
fate may no one resist  
and yet must you come hither."  
Wisely she asked:  
might they not be appeased?  
No one consented,  
all answered no.

47. Saw then the high-born lady  
that a hard game they played;  
a deadly deed she meditated,  
and her robe dashed aside,  
a naked falchion seized,  
and her kinsmen's lives defended:  
skilful she was in warfare,  
where her hand she applied.

48. Giuki's daughter caused  
two warriors to fall;  
Atli's brother she struck down,  
he must thenceforth be borne  
so she the conflict managed,  
that she his foot struck off.  
Another too she smote,  
so that he never rose,  
to Hel she sent him:  
her hand trembled not.

49. A conflict then ensued,  
which was widely famed,  
but that excelled all else  
which Giuki's sons performed.  
So 'tis said the Niflungs,  
while yet they lived,  
with swords maintained the fight,  
corslets rent,  
helmets hewed,  
as their hearts prompted.

50. At morning most they fought,  
until mid-day had passed;  
all early morn,  
and the forenoon,  
ere the fight was ended,  
the field flowed with blood,  
until eighteen had fallen:  
Bera's two sons,  
and her brother,  
had them overcome.

51. Then the fierce Atli spoke,  
wroth though he was:  
"Tis ill to look around;  
this is long of you.  
We were thirty  
warlike thanes,  
eleven survive:  
the chasm is too great.  
We were five brothers,  
when Budli died;  
now has Hel the half,  
two lie slain.

52. "A great affinity I obtained,  
 that I cannot deny,  
 pernicious woman!  
 of which I have no benefit:  
 peace we have seldom had,  
 since thou among us camest.  
 Of kinsmen ye have bereft me,  
 of riches often wronged.  
 To Hel my sister ye have sent;  
 that is to me most bitter."

Guðrún

53. "This thou callest to mind, Atli!  
 but thou so first didst act:  
 my mother thou didst take,  
 and for her treasures murder;  
 my gifted niece with hunger  
 thou didst cause to perish.  
 Laughable to me it seems,  
 when thou sorrows doest recount.  
 The gods are to be thanked,  
 that it goes ill with thee."

Atli

54. "Jarls! I exhort you  
 the sorrow to augment  
 of that presumptuous woman:  
 I would fain see it.  
 Strive so to do,  
 that Guðrún may lament.  
 Might I but see  
 that in her lot she joys not!

55. Take ye Högni,  
 and with a knife hack him:  
 cut out his heart:  
 this ye shall do.  
 Gunnar the fierce of soul  
 to a gallows fasten;  
 do the work thoroughly,  
 lure up the serpents."

Högni

56. Do as thou listest,  
 glad I will await it;  
 stout I shall prove myself:  
 I have ere now things much harder proved.  
 Ye had a hindrance  
 while unscathed we were:  
 now are we so wounded  
 that our fate thou mayest command.

57. Beiti spake,  
 he was Atli's steward  
 Take we Hialli,  
 but Högni let us save.  
 Let us do half the work;  
 he is death-worthy.  
 As long as he lives  
 a slug he will ever be.

58. Terrified was the kettle-watcher  
 the place no longer held him:  
 he could be a whiner,  
 he clomb into every nook:  
 their conflict was his bane,  
 as he the penalty must pay;  
 and the day sad,  
 when he must from the swine die,  
 from all good things,  
 which he had enjoyed.

59. Budli's cook they took,  
 and the knife brought towards him.  
 Howled the wretched thrall,  
 ere the point he felt;  
 declared that he had time  
 the gardens to manure,  
 the vilest offices to do,  
 if from death he might escape.  
 Joyful indeed was Hialli,  
 could he but save his life.

60. Högni all this observed  
 few so act,  
 as for a slave to intercede,  
 that he may escape  
 “Less ‘tis, I say, for me  
 to play this game myself.  
 Why shall we here desire  
 to listen to that screaming?”

61. Hands on the good prince they laid.  
 Then was no option  
 for the bold warriors,  
 the sentence longer to delay.  
 Then laughed Högni;  
 heard the sons of day  
 how he could hold out:  
 torment he well endured!

62. A harp Gunnar took,  
 with his foot-branches touched it.  
 He could so strike it,  
 that women wept,  
 and the men sobbed,  
 who best could hear it.  
 He the noble queen counseled:  
 the rafters burst asunder.

63. There died the noble,  
 at the dawn of day;  
 at the last they caused  
 their deeds to live.

64. Atli thought himself great:  
 over them both he strode,  
 to the sagacious woman told the evil,  
 and bitterly reproached her.  
 “It is now morning, Gudrún!  
 thy loved ones thou hast lost;  
 partly thou art the cause  
 that it has so befallen.”

Guðrún

65. Joyful art thou, Atli!  
 slaughter to announce:  
 repentance shall await thee,  
 when thou hast all proved.  
 That heritage shall be left thee  
 that I can tell thee  
 that ill shall never from thee go,  
 unless I also die.

Atli

66. That I can prevent;  
 another course I see,  
 easier by half:  
 the good we oft reject.  
 With slaves I will console thee,  
 with things most precious,  
 with snow-white silver,  
 as thou thyself mayest desire.

Guðrún

67. Of that there is no hope;  
 I will all reject;  
 atonement I have spurned  
 for smaller injuries.  
 Hard I was ever thought,  
 now will that be aggravated.  
 I every grudge concealed,  
 while Högni lived.

68. We were both nurtured  
 in one house;  
 many a play we played,  
 and in the wood grew up;  
 Grimhild us adorned  
 with gold and necklaces;  
 for my brothers' death  
 never wilt thou indemnify me,  
 nor ever do  
 what shall to me seem good.

69. Mens' too great power  
 women's lot oppresses;  
 on the knee the hand sinks,  
 if the arms wither;  
 the tree inclines,  
 if its root-fibres are severed.  
 Now, Atli! thou mayest alone  
 over all here command.

70. Most unwise it was,  
 when to this the prince gave credit:  
 the guild was manifest,  
 had he been on his guard.  
 Dissembling then was Gudrún,  
 against her heart she could speak,  
 made herself gay appear,  
 with two shields she played.<sup>6</sup>

71. A banquet she would prepare,  
 her brothers' funeral feast;  
 the same would Atli also  
 for his own do.

72. With this they ended;  
 the banquet was prepared;  
 the feasting was  
 too luxurious.  
 The woman great of heart was stern,  
 she warred on Budli's race;  
 on her spouse she would  
 cruel vengeance wreak.

73. The young ones she enticed,  
 and on a block laid them,  
 the fierce babes were terrified,  
 and wept not,  
 to their mother's bosom crept,  
 asked what was she was going to do.

6. She played a double game.



74. "Ask no questions,  
both I intend to kill;  
long have I desired  
to cut short your days."

75. "Slay as thou wilt thy children,  
no one hinders it;  
thy rage will have short peace,  
if thou destroyest us  
in our blooming years,  
thou desperate woman!"  
It fell out accordingly:  
she cut the throats of both.

76. Atli oft inquired  
whither his boys  
were gone to play,  
as he nowhere saw them?

Gudrún

77. Over I am resolved to go,  
and to Atli tell it.  
Grimhild's daughter  
will not conceal from thee.  
Little glad, Atli! wilt thou be,  
when all thou learnest;  
great woe didst thou raise up,  
when thou my brothers slewest.

78. Very seldom have I slept  
since they fell.  
Bitterly I threatened thee:  
now I have reminded thee.  
'It is now morning,' saidst thou:  
I yet it well remember;  
and it now is eve,  
when thou the like shalt learn.

79. Thou thy sons hast lost,  
as thou least shouldest;  
know that their skulls thou  
hast had for beer-cups;

thy drink I prepared,  
I their red blood have shed.

80. I their hearts took,  
and on a spit staked them,  
then to thee gave them.  
I said they were of calves,  
it was long of thee alone  
thou didst leave none,  
voraciously didst devour,  
well didst ply thy teeth.

81. Thy children's fate thou knowest,  
few a worse awaits.  
I have my part performed,  
though in it glory not.

Atli

82. Cruel was thou, Gudrún!  
who couldst so act,  
with thy children's blood  
my drink to mingle.  
Thou hast destroyed thy offspring,  
as thou least shouldst;  
and to myself thou leavest  
a short interval from ill.

Guadrún

83. I could still desire  
thyself to slay;  
rarely too ill  
it fares with such a prince.  
Thou hast already perpetrated  
crimes unexampled among men  
of frantic cruelty,  
in this world:  
now thou hast added  
what we have just witnessed.  
A great misdeed hast thou committed,  
thy death-feast thou hast prepared.

Atli

84. On the pile thou shalt be burnt,  
but first be stoned;  
then wilt thou have earned  
what thou hast ever sought.

Guðrún

85. Tell to thyself such griefs  
early to-morrow:  
by a fairer death I will  
pass to another light.

86. In the same hall they sat,  
exchanged hostile thoughts,  
banded words of hate:  
each was ill at ease.

87. Hate waxed in a Hniflung,  
a great deed he meditated;  
to Guðrún he declared  
that he was Atli's deadly foe.

88. Into her mind came  
Högni's treatment;  
happy she him accounted,  
if he vengeance wreaked.  
Then was Atli slain,  
within a little space;  
Högni's son him slew,  
and Guðrún herself.

89. The bold king spake,  
roused up from sleep;  
quickly he felt the wounds,  
said he no binding needed.  
"Tell me most truly  
who has slain Budli's son.  
I am hardly treated:  
of life I have no hope."

Guðrún

90. I, Grimhild's daughter,  
will not from thee hide,  
that I am the cause  
that thy life passes away;  
but partly Högni's son,  
that thy wounds make thee faint.

Atli

91. To the slaughter thou hast rushed,  
although it ill beseemed thee;  
'tis bad to circumvent a friend,  
who well confided in thee.  
Besought I went from home,  
to woo thee, Guðrún!

92. A widow thou wast left,  
fierce thou was accounted,  
which was no falsehood,  
as we have proved.  
Hither home thou camest,  
us a host of men attended;  
all was splendid  
on our journey.

93. Pomp of all kinds was there,  
of illustrious men,  
beeves in abundance:  
largely we enjoyed them.  
Of all things there was plenty  
partaken of by many.

94. A marriage gift to my bride I gave,  
treasures for her acceptance,  
thralls thrice ten,  
seven fair female slaves:  
in such things was honour;  
silver there was yet more.

95. All seemed to thee  
 as it were naught,  
 while the lands untouched lay,  
 which Budli had left me.  
 So didst thou undermine,  
 didst allow me nothing to receive.  
 Thou didst my mother let  
 often sit weeping:  
 with heart content I found not  
 one of my household after.

Gudrún

96. Now, Atli! thou liest,  
 though of that I little reck.  
 Gentle I seldom was,  
 yet didst thou greatly aggravate it.  
 Young brothers ye fought together,  
 among yourselves contended;  
 to Hel went the half  
 from thy house:  
 all went to ruin  
 that should be for benefit.

97. Brothers and sisters we were three,  
 we thought ourselves invincible:  
 from the land we departed,  
 we followed Sigurd.  
 We roved about,  
 each steered a ship;  
 seeking luck we went,  
 till to the east we came.

98. The chief king we slew,  
 there a land obtained,  
 the 'hersar' yielded to us;  
 that manifested fear.  
 We from the forest freed  
 him whom we wished harmless,  
 raised him to prosperity  
 who nothing had possessed.

99. The Hun king<sup>7</sup> died,  
 then suddenly my fortune changed:  
 great was the young wife's grief,  
 the widow's lot was hers.  
 A torment to me it seemed  
 to come living to the house of Atli.  
 A hero had possessed me:  
 sad was that loss!

100. Thou didst never from a contest come,  
 as we have heard,  
 where thou didst gain thy cause,  
 or others overcome;  
 ever wouldst thou give way,  
 and never stand,  
 lettest all pass off quietly,  
 as ill beseemed a king.

Atli  
 101. Gudrún! now thou liest.  
 Little will be bettered  
 the lot of either:  
 we have all suffered.  
 Now act thou, Gudrún!  
 Of thy goodness,  
 and for our honour,  
 when I forth am borne.

Gudrún  
 102. I a ship will buy,  
 and a painted cist;<sup>8</sup>  
 will the winding-sheet well wax,  
 to enwrap thy corse;  
 will think of every requisite,  
 as if we had each other loved.

7. Sigurd.

8. The ancient usage of laying the body in a ship and sending it adrift, seems inconsistent with the later custom of depositing it in a cist or coffin.

103. Atli was now a corpse,  
lament from his kin arose:  
the illustrious woman did  
all she had promised.  
The wise woman would  
go to destroy herself;  
her days were lengthened:  
she died another time.

104. Happy is every one hereafter  
who shall give birth to such  
a daughter famed for deeds,  
as Giuki begat:  
ever will live,  
in every land,  
their oft-told tale,  
wherever people shall give ear.





## Gudrúnarhvöt: Gudrún's Incitement

Having slain Atli, Gudrún went to the sea-shore. She went out into the sea, and would destroy herself, but could not sink. She was borne across the firth to the land of King Jonakr, who married her. Their sons were Sörli, Erp, and Hamdir. There was reared up Svanhild, the daughter of Sigurd. She was given in marriage to Jörmunrek the Powerful. With him lived Bikki, who counseled Randver, the king's son, to take her. Bikki told that to the king, who caused Randver to be hanged, and Svanhild trodden under horses' feet. When Gudrún heard of this she said to her sons:

1. Then heard I tell  
of quarrels dire,  
hard sayings uttered  
from great affliction,  
when her sons  
the fierce-hearted Gudrún,  
in deadly words,  
to slaughter instigated.  
\*\*\*\*\*

2. "Why sit ye here?  
why sleep life away?  
why does it pain you not  
joyous words to speak,  
now Jörmunrek  
your sister  
young in years  
has with horses trodden,  
white and black,  
in the public way,  
with grey and way-wont  
Gothic steeds?"

3. Ye are not like  
to Gunnar and the others,  
nor of soul so valiant,  
as Högni was.  
Her ye should  
seek to avenge,  
if ye had the courage  
of my brothers,  
or the fierce spirit  
of the Hunnish kings."

4. Then said Hamdir,  
 the great of heart:  
 “Little didst thou care  
 Högni’s deed to praise,  
 when Sigurd he  
 from sleep awaked.  
 They blue-white  
 bed-clothes were  
 red with thy husband’s gore,  
 with death-blood covered.

5. For thy brothers thou didst  
 o’er-hasty vengeance take,  
 dire and bitter,  
 when thou thy sons didst murder.  
 We young ones<sup>1</sup> could  
 on Jörmunrek,  
 acting all together,  
 have avenged our sister.

6. Bring forth the arms  
 of the Hunnish kings:  
 thou hast us stimulated  
 to a sword-mote.”

7. Laughing Guðrún  
 to the storehouse turned,  
 the kings’ crested helms  
 from the coffers drew,  
 their ample corslets,  
 and to her sons them bore.  
 The young heroes loaded  
 their horses’ shoulders.

8. Then said Hamdir,  
 the great of heart:  
 “So will no more come  
 his mother to see,  
 the warrior felled  
 in the Gothic land,

1. Themselves and the two sons of Atli.

so that thou the funeral-beer  
 after us all my drink,  
 after Svanhild  
 and thy sons.”

9. Weeping Gudrún,  
 Giuki's daughter,  
 sorrowing went,  
 to sit in the fore-court,  
 and to recount,  
 with tear-worn cheeks,  
 sad of soul, her calamities,  
 in many ways.

10. “Three fires I have known,  
 three hearths I have known,  
 of three consorts I have been  
 borne to the house.  
 Sigurd alone to me was  
 better than all,  
 of whom my brothers  
 were the murderers.

11. Of my painful wounds  
 I might not complain;  
 yet they even more  
 seemed to afflict me,  
 when those chieftains  
 to Atli gave me.

12. My bright boys  
 I called to speak with me;  
 for my injuries I could not  
 get revenge,  
 ere I had severed  
 the Hniflungs heads.

13. To the sea-shore I went,  
 against the Norns I was embittered;  
 I would cast off  
 their persecution;  
 bore, and submerged me not

the towering billows;  
 up on land I rose,  
 because I was to live.

14. To the nuptial couch I went  
 as I thought better for me,  
 for the third time,  
 with a mighty king.  
 I brought forth offspring,  
 guardians of the heritage,  
 guardians of the heritage,  
 Jonarkr's sons.

15. But around Svanhild  
 bond-maidens sat;  
 of all my children her  
 I loved the best.  
 Svanhild was,  
 in my hall,  
 as was the sun-beam,  
 fair to behold.

16. I with gold adorned her,  
 and with fine raiment,  
 before I gave her  
 to the Gothic people.  
 That is to me the hardest  
 of all my woes,  
 that Svanhild's  
 beauteous locks  
 should in the mire be trodden  
 under horses' feet.

17. But that was yet more painful,  
 when my Sigurd they  
 ingloriously  
 slew in his bed;  
 though of all most cruel,  
 when of Gunnar  
 the glistening serpents  
 to the vitals crawled;  
 but the most agonizing,

which to my heart flew,  
 when the brave king's heart  
 they while quick cut out.

18. Many griefs I call to memory,  
 many ills I call to memory.  
 Guide, Sigurd!  
 thy black steed,  
 thy swift courser,  
 hither let it run.  
 Here sits  
 no son's wife, no daughter,  
 who to Gudrún  
 precious things may give.

19. Remember, Sigurd!  
 what we together said,  
 when on our bed  
 we both were sitting,  
 that thou, brave one,  
 wouldst come to me  
 from Hel's abode,  
 but I from the world to thee.

20. Raise, ye Jarls!  
 an oaken pile;  
 let it under heaven  
 the highest be.  
 May it burn  
 a breast full of woes!  
 the fire round my heart  
 its sorrows melt!"

21. May all men's lot  
 be bettered,  
 all women's  
 sorrow lessened,  
 to whom this tale of woes  
 shall be recounted.



## Hamðismal: The Lay of Hamdir.

1. In that court<sup>1</sup> arose  
woeful deeds,  
at the Alfar's  
doleful lament;<sup>2</sup>  
at early morn,  
men's afflictions,  
troubles of various kinds;  
sorrows were quickened.

2. It was not now,  
nor yesterday,  
a long time since  
has passed away,  
few things are more ancient,  
it was by much earlier  
when Gudrún,  
Giuki's daughter,  
her young sons instigated  
Svanhild to avenge.

3. "She was your sister,  
her name Svanhild,  
she whom Jörmunrek  
with horses trod to death,  
on the public way,  
with grey and way-wont  
Gothic steeds.

4. Thenceforth all is sad to you,  
kings of people!  
Ye alone survive,

5. "Branches of my race.  
Lonely I am become,  
as the asp-tree in the forest,

1. See Str. 10, and Ghv. 9, and, Luning, Glossar.

2. *The Alfar's Lament* is the early dawn, and is in apposition to "early morn," in the following line. The swart Alfar are meant, who were turned to stone if they did not flee from the light of day. This is the best interpretation I can offer of this obscure strophe.

of kindred bereft,  
 as the fir of branches;  
 of joy deprived,  
 as is the tree of foliage,  
 when the branch-spoiler  
 comes in the warm day."

6. Then spake Hamdir,  
 the great of soul,  
 "Little, Gudrún! didst thou care  
 Högni's deed to praise,  
 when Sigurd they  
 from sleep awaked.  
 On the bed thou satst,  
 and the murderers laughed.

7. Thy bed-clothes,  
 blue and white,  
 woven by cunning hands,  
 swam in thy husband's gore.  
 When Sigurd perished,  
 o'er the dead thou satst,  
 caredst not for mirth  
 So Gunnar willed it.

8. Atli thou wouldst afflict  
 by Erp's murder,  
 and by Eitil's  
 life's destruction:  
 that proved for thyself the worse:  
 therefore should every one  
 so against others use,  
 a sharp-biting sword,  
 that he harm not himself."

9. Then said Sörli  
 he had a prudent mind  
 "I with my mother will not  
 speeches exchange:  
 though words to each of you  
 to me seem wanting.  
 What, Gudrún! dost thou desire,  
 which for tears thou canst not utter?"



10. For thy brothers weep,  
 and thy dear sons,  
 thy nearest kin,  
 drawn to the strife:  
 for us both shalt thou, Guadrún!  
 also have to weep,  
 who here sit fated on our steeds,  
 far away to die."

11. From the court they went,  
 for conflict ready.  
 The young men journeyed  
 over humid fells,  
 on Hunnish steeds,  
 murder to avenge.

12. Then said Erp,  
 all at once  
 the noble youth was joking  
 on his horse's back  
 "Ill 'tis to a timid man  
 to point out the ways."  
 They said the bastard<sup>3</sup>  
 was over bold.

13. On their way they had found  
 the wily jester.  
 "How will the swarthy dwarf  
 afford us aid?"

14. He of another mother answered:  
 so he said aid he would  
 to his kin afford,  
 as one foot to the other<sup>4</sup>  
 (or, grown to the body,  
 one hand the other.)

3. In this and the four following strophes the person alluded to is their half-brother Erp, of whose story nothing more is known. He, it appears, had preceded or outridden the others.

4. Malmesbury relates a similar story of king Æthelstan and his cupbearer.

15. "What can a foot  
to a foot give;  
or, grown to the body,  
one hand the other?"

16. From the sheath they drew  
the iron blade,  
the falchion's edges,  
for Hel's delight.  
They their strength diminished  
by a third part,  
they their young kinsman caused  
to earth to sink.

17. Their mantles then they shook,  
their weapons grasped;  
the high-born were clad  
in sumptuous raiment.

18. Forward lay the ways,  
a woeful path they found,  
and their sister's son  
wounded on a gibbet,  
wind-cold outlaw-trees,<sup>5</sup>  
on the town's west.  
Ever vibrated the ravens' whet:  
there to tarry was not good.

19. Uproar was in the hall,  
men were with drink excited,  
so that the horses' tramp  
no one heard,  
until a mindful man  
winded his horn.

20. To announce they went  
to Jörmunrek  
that were seen  
helm-decked warriors.

5. Lit. *wolf-trees*; a fugitive criminal being called *vargr* wolf.

"Take ye counsel,  
 potent ones are come;  
 before mighty men ye have  
 on a damsel trampled."

21. Then laughed Jörmunrek,  
 with his hand stroked his beard,  
 asked not for his corslet;  
 with wine he struggled  
 shook his dark locks,  
 on his white shield looked,  
 and in his hand  
 swung the golden cup.

22. "Happy should I seem,  
 if I could see  
 Hamdir and Sörli  
 within my hall.  
 I would them then  
 With bowstrings bind,  
 The good sons of Giuki  
 on the gallows hang."

23. Then said Hródröglöd,  
 on the high steps standing;  
 "Prince," said she  
 to her son  
 for that was threatened  
 which ought not to happen  
 "shall two men alone  
 bind or slay  
 ten hundred Goths  
 in this lofty burgh?"

24. Tumult was in the mansion,  
 the beer-cups flew in shivers,  
 men lay in blood  
 from the Goths' breasts flowing.

25. Then said Hamdir,  
 the great of heart:  
 "Jörmunrek! thou didst

desire our coming,  
 brothers of one mother,  
 into thy burgh;<sup>1</sup>  
 now seest thou thy feet,  
 seest thy hands  
 Jörmunrek! cast  
 into the glowing fire.

26. Then roared forth  
 a godlike<sup>2</sup>  
 mail-clad warrior,  
 as a bear roars:  
 "On the men hurl stones,  
 since spears bite not,  
 nor edge of sword, nor point,  
 the sons of Jonakr."

27. Then said Hamdir,  
 the great of heart:  
 "Harm didst thou, brother!  
 when thou that mouth didst ope.  
 Oft from that mouth  
 bad counsel comes."

28. "Courage hast thou, Hamdir!  
 if only thou hadst sense:  
 that man lacks much  
 who wisdom lacks.

29. Off would the head now be,  
 had but Erp lived,  
 our brother bold in fight,  
 whom on the way we slew,  
 that warrior brave  
 me the Dísir instigated  
 that man sacred to us,  
 whom we resolved to slay.

6. According to the *Skalda* it would appear that they cut off his hands and feet while he was asleep. Erp, had they not murdered him, was to have cut off his head.

7. Odin, as in the Battle of Bravalla.

30. I ween not that ours should be  
the wolves' example,  
that with ourselves we should contend,  
like the Norns' dogs,  
that voracious are  
in the desert nurtured."

31. "Well have we fought,  
on slaughtered Goths we stand,  
on those fallen by the sword,  
like eagles on a branch.  
Great glory we have gained,  
Though now or to morrow we shall die.  
No one lives till eve  
against the Norns' decree."

32. There fell Sörli,  
at the mansion's front;  
but Hamdir sank  
at the house's back.

This is called the Old Lay of Hamdir.



## Gunnars Slagr: Gunnar's Melody.

1. It of old befell that Gunnar,  
Giuki's son,  
was doomed to die  
In Grábak's halls.  
The feet were free  
of the king's son,  
but his hands were bound  
with hard bonds.

2. A harp he seized,  
the warrior king  
his skill displayed,  
his foot-branches moved,  
the harp-strings  
sweetly touched:  
that art had not been practised  
save by the king's son.

3. Then sang Gunnar,  
in these strains:  
the harp got voice,  
as it had been a man;  
yet not a sweeter sound,  
had it been a swan;  
the hall of serpents echoed  
to the golden strings:

4. "I my sister know  
wedded to the worst of men,  
and to the Niflungs'  
base foe espoused.  
To his home bade Atli  
Högni and Gunnar,  
his relations,  
but murdered both.

5. Slaughter he made them  
take for festivity,  
and conflict for  
convivial potations.  
Ever will that survive  
while men shall live:  
so did relations never  
any one delude.

6. Why, Atli! dost thou  
so wreak thy anger?  
Herself did Brynhild  
cause to die,  
and Sigurd's  
cruel death.  
Why wouldst thou Gudrún  
cause to weep?

7. Long since the raven told,  
from the high tree,  
our calamities,  
at our relation's death;  
Brynhild told me,  
Budli's daughter,  
how Atli would  
deceive us both.

8. This also Glaumvör said,  
when we both reposed,  
for the last time,  
in the same bed,  
my consort had  
portentous dreams  
'Go not Gunnar!  
Atli is now false to thee.



9. A lance I saw  
red with thy blood,  
a gallows ready  
for Giuki's son:  
I thought for thee the Dísir  
prepared a feast;  
I ween that for you brothers  
treachery is at work.'

10. Said also Kostbera  
she was Högni's wife  
the runes were falsely graved,  
and the dreams interpreted.  
But the heart beat high  
In the princes' breast,  
neither knew fear  
of a cruel death.

11. The Norns have for us,  
Giuki's heirs,  
a life-time appointed,  
at Odin's will;  
no one may  
against fate provide,  
nor, of luck bereft,  
in his valour trust.

12. Atli! I laugh  
that thou hast not  
the red-gold rings  
that Hreidmar owned;  
I alone know where that treasure  
hidden lies,  
since that Högni  
to the heart ye cut.

13. Atli! I laugh,  
that ye Huns  
the laughing Högni  
to the heart cut.  
The Hniflung shrank not  
from the scooping wound,  
nor flinched he from  
a painful death.

14. Atli! I laugh,  
that thou hast lost  
many of thy men  
that choicest were,  
beneath our swords,  
before thy own death.  
Our noble sister has  
thy brother maimed.

15. Yet shall not Gunnar,  
Giuki's son,  
fear express  
in Grafvitnir's dwelling;  
nor dejected go  
to the sire of hosts:  
Already is the prince  
inured to suffering.

16. Sooner shall Góin  
pierce me to the heart,  
and Nidhögg  
such my reins,  
Linn and Lángbak  
my liver tear,  
than I will abandon  
my steadfastness of heart.

17. Gudrún it will  
grimly avenge,  
that Atli us  
has both deceived;  
she to thee, king! will  
give the hearts  
of thy cubs,  
hot at the evening meal;

18. And their blood  
thou from cups shalt drink  
formed of their skulls.  
That mental anguish shall  
bite thee most cruelly,  
when Gudrún sets  
such crimes before thee.

19. Short will be thy life  
after the princes' death;  
an ill end thou wilt have,  
for breach of our affinity:  
such is befitting thee,  
through the deed  
of our sister sorely impelled  
thy treachery to requite.

20. Gudrún will thee  
with a lance lay low,  
and the Niflung  
stand hard by;  
in thy palace  
will the red flame play;  
then in Náströnd thou shalt  
be to Nidhögg given.

21. Now is Grábak lulled,  
 and Grafvitnir,  
 Góin and Móin,  
 and Grafvöllud,  
 Ofnir and Svafnir,  
 with venom glistening,  
 Nad and Nidhögg,  
 and the serpents all,  
 Hring, Höggvarg,  
 by the harp's sound.

22. Alone wakeful remains  
 Atli's mother,  
 she has pierced me  
 to the heart's roots,  
 my liver sucks,  
 and my lungs tears.

23. Cease now, my harp!  
 hence I will depart,  
 and in the vast  
 Valhall abide,  
 with the Æsir drink  
 of costly cups,  
 be with Sæhrimnir sated  
 at Odin's feast.

24. Now is Gunnar's melody  
 all sung out;  
 I have men delighted  
 for the last time.  
 Henceforth few princes will  
 with their foot-branches  
 the sweetly sounding  
 harp-strings strike."

## Gróttasöngur: The Lay of Grótti, or The Mill-Song

King Fródi succeeded to the kingdom of Denmark at the time when the emperor Augustus had proclaimed peace over all the world; and as Fródi was the most powerful king in the North, the peace was attributed to him and called Fródi's peace, where-ever the Danish tongue was spoken. When on a visit to king Fiölnir in Sweden, he bought two female slaves, whose names were Fenia and Menia, both of great strength and stature. At this time two mill-stones were found in Denmark so large that no one could drag them. These stones possessed the property of grinding whatever the grinder wished. Fródi set the two slaves to work at the quern, or mill, which was named Grótti and commanded them to grind gold, peace, and prosperity to Fródi; but he allowed them not a moment's rest nor even sleep longer than while the cuckoo was silent, or a song might be sung. They then sang the song called *Gróttasöngur*, and ceased not before they had ground an army against Fródi, so that in the night a sea-king, named Mýsing, came, slew Fródi, and carried off great booty. Such was the end of Fródi's peace. Mýsing took Grótti, together with Fenia and Menia, and caused white salt to be ground in his ships, until they sank in Pentland Firth. There is ever since a vortex where the sea falls into Grótti's eye; there the sea roars as it (Grótti) roars, and then it was that the sea first became salt. *Skalda*, edit. Rask, p. 146.

1. Now are come  
to the king's house  
two prescient damsels,  
Fenia and Menia;  
they are with Fródi,  
Fridleif's son,  
the powerful maidens,  
in thralldom held.

2. To the mill  
they both were led,  
and the grey stone  
to set a going ordered;  
he to both forbade  
rest and solace,  
before he heard  
the maidens' voice.

3. They made resound  
the clattering quern,  
with their arms  
swung the light stones.  
The maidens he commanded  
yet more to grind.

4. They sung and swung  
the whirling stone,  
until Fródi's thralls  
nearly all slept.  
Then said Menia  
to the meal 'twas come

5. "Riches we grind for Fródi,  
all happiness we grind,  
wealth in abundance,  
in gladness' mill.  
On riches may he sit,  
on down may he sleep,  
to joy may he wake:  
then 'tis well ground!

6. Here shall not one  
another harm,  
evil machinate,  
nor occasion death,  
nor yet strike  
with the biting sword,  
although a brother's slayer  
he find bound."

7. He had not yet said  
one word before:  
"Sleep ye not longer  
than the gowks round the house,  
or than while  
one song I sing."

8. "Thou was not, Fródi!  
for thyself over-wise,  
or a friend of men,  
when thralls thou boughtest;  
for strength thou chocest them,  
and for their looks,  
but of their race  
didst not inquire.

9. Stout was Hrúgnir,  
and his father,  
yet was Thiassi  
stronger than they;  
Idi and Örnir  
our relations are,  
brothers of the mountain-giants  
from whom we are born.

10. Grótti had not come  
from the grey fell,  
nor yet the hard  
stone from the earth;  
nor so had ground  
the giant maid,  
if her race had  
aught of her known.

11. Nine winters we  
playmates were,  
strong and nurtured  
beneath the earth.  
We maidens stood  
at mighty works;  
ourselves we moved  
the fast rock from its place.

12. We rolled the stone  
o'er the giants' house,  
so that earth thereby  
shrank trembling;  
so hurled we  
the whirling rock,  
that men could take it.

13. But afterwards, in Sweden,  
we prescient two  
among people went,  
chased the bear,  
and shattered shields;  
went against  
a grey-sarked host,  
aided one prince,  
another overthrew,  
afforded the good  
Guthrom help.  
Quiet I sat not  
ere we warriors felled.

14. Thus we went on  
all those winters,  
so that in conflicts  
we were known;  
there we carved,  
with our sharp spears,  
blood from wounds,  
and reddened brands.

15. Now are we come  
to a king's house,  
unpitied both,  
and in thraldom held;  
gravel gnaws our feet,  
and above 'tis cold;  
a foe's host we drew.  
Sad 'tis at Fródi's!

16. Hands must rest,  
the stone shall stand still;  
for me I have  
my portion ground.  
To hands will not  
rest be given,  
until Fródi thinks  
enough is ground.



17. Hands shall hold  
 falchions hard,  
 the weapon slaughter-gory.  
 Wake thou, Fródi!  
 wake thou, Fródi!  
 if thou wilt listen  
 to our songs  
 and sagas old.

18. Fire I see burning  
 east of the burgh;  
 tidings of war are rife:  
 that should be a token;  
 a host will forthwith  
 hither come,  
 and the town burn  
 over the king.

19. Thou wilt not hold  
 the throne of Lethra,  
 rings of red gold,  
 or mighty mill-stone.  
 Let us ply the winch,  
 girl! yet more rapidly;  
 are we not grown up  
 in deadly slaughter?

20. My father's daughter  
 has stoutly ground,  
 because the fate  
 of many men she saw.  
 Huge fragments  
 spring from the mill-stone  
 into the Örnefjörð.  
 Let us grind on!

21. Let us grind on!  
Yrsa's son,  
Hálfðan's kinsman,  
will avenge Fródi:  
he will of her  
be called  
son and brother:  
we both know that."

22. The maidens ground,  
their might applied;  
the damsels were  
in Jotun-mood,  
the axes trembled;  
the stone fell from above,  
the ponderous rock  
was in shivers split.

23. But the mountain-giants'  
maiden said;  
"Frodi! we have ground;  
together we cease,  
the maidens have  
stood at the grinding long."