GRIMNISMOL (THE BALLAD OF GRIMNIR)

King Hrauthung had two sons: one was called Agnar, and the other Geirröth. Agnar was ten winters old, and Geirröth eight. Once they both rowed in a boat with their fishing-gear to catch little fish; and the wind drove them out into the sea. In the darkness of the night they were wrecked on the shore; and going up, they found a poor peasant, with whom they stayed through the winter. The housewife took care of Agnar, and the peasant cared for Geirröth, and taught him wisdom. In the spring the peasant gave him a boat; and when the couple led them to the shore, the peasant spoke secretly with Geirröth. They had a fair wind, and came to their father's landing-place. Geirröth was forward in the boat; he leaped up on land, but pushed out the boat and said, "Go thou now where evil may have thee!" The boat drifted out to sea. Geirröth, however, went up to the house, and was well received, but his father was dead. Then Geirröth was made king, and became a renowned man.

Othin and Frigg sat in Hlithskjolf and looked over all the worlds. Othin said: "Seest thou Agnar, thy fosterling, how he begets children with a giantess in the cave? But Geirröth, my fosterling, is a king, and now rules over his land." Frigg said: "He is so miserly that he tortures his guests if he thinks that too many of them come to him." Othin replied that this was the greatest of lies; and they made a wager about this matter. Frigg sent her maid-servant, Fulla, to Geirröth. She bade the king beware lest a magician who was come thither to his land should bewitch him, and told this sign concerning him, that no dog was so fierce as to leap at him. Now it was a very great slander that King Geirröth was not hospitable; but nevertheless he had them take the man whom the dogs would not attack. He wore a dark-blue mantle and called himself Grimnir, but said no more about himself, though he was questioned. The king had him tortured to make him speak, and set him between two fires, and he sat there eight nights. King Geirröth had a son ten winters old, and called Agnar after his father's brother. Agnar went to Grimnir, and gave him a full horn to drink from, and said that the king did ill in letting him be tormented without cause. Grimnir drank from the horn; the fire had come so near that the mantle burned on Grimnir's back. He spake:

1. Hot art thou, fire! | too fierce by far;
Get ye now gone, ye flames!
The mantle is burnt, | though I bear it aloft,
And the fire scorches the fur.

2. ’Twixt the fires now | eight nights have I sat,
And no man brought meat to me,
Save Agnar alone, | and alone shall rule
Geirröth’s son o’er the Goths.

3. Hail to thee, Agnar! | for hailed thou art
By the voice of Veratyr;
For a single drink | shalt thou never receive
A greater gift as reward.

4. The land is holy | that lies hard by
The gods and the elves together;
And Thor shall ever | in Thruthheim dwell,
Till the gods to destruction go.

5. Ydalir call they | the place where Ull
A hall for himself hath set;
And Alfheim the gods | to Freyr once gave
As a tooth-gift in ancient times.

6. A third home is there, | with silver thatched
By the hands of the gracious gods:
Valaskjolf is it, | in days of old
Set by a god for himself.

7. Sökkvabekk is the fourth, | where cool waves flow,
And amid their murmur it stands;
There daily do Othin | and Saga drink
In gladness from cups of gold.

8. The fifth is Glathsheim, | and gold-bright there
Stands Valhall stretching wide;
And there does Othin | each day choose
The men who have fallen in fight.

9. Easy is it to know | for him who to Othin
Comes and beholds the hall;
Its rafters are spears, | with shields is it roofed,
On its benches are breastplates strewn.

10. Easy is it to know | for him who to Othin
Comes and beholds the hall;
There hangs a wolf | by the western door,
And o’er it an eagle hovers.

11. The sixth is Thrymheim, | where Thjazi dwelt,
The giant of marvelous might;
Now Skathi abides, | the god’s fair bride,
In the home that her father had.

12. The seventh is Breithablik; | Baldr has there
For himself a dwelling set,
In the land I know | that lies so fair,
And from evil fate is free.

13. Himinbjorg is the eighth, | and Heimdall there
O’er men holds sway, it is said;
In his well-built house | does the warder of heaven
The good mead gladly drink.

14. The ninth is Folkvang, | where Freyja decrees
Who shall have seats in the hall;
The half of the dead | each day does she choose,
And half does Othin have.

15. The tenth is Glitnir; | its pillars are gold,
And its roof with silver is set;
There most of his days | does Forseti dwell,
And sets all strife at end.

16. The eleventh is Noatun; | there has Njorth
For himself a dwelling set;
The sinless ruler | of men there sits
In his temple timbered high.

17. Filled with growing trees | and high-standing grass
Is Vithi, Vithar’s land;
But there did the son | from his steed leap down,
When his father he fain would avenge.

18. In Eldhrimnir | Andhrimnir cooks
Sæhrimnir’s seething flesh,—
The best of food, | but few men know
On what fare the warriors feast.

19. Freki and Geri | does Heerfather feed,
The far-famed fighter of old:

But on wine alone | does the weapon-decked god,
Othin, forever live.

20. O’er Mithgarth Hugin | and Munin both
Each day set forth to fly;
For Hugin I fear | lest he come not home,
But for Munin my care is more.

21. Loud roars Thund, | and Thjothvitnir’s fish
Joyously fares in the flood;
Hard does it seem | to the host of the slain
To wade the torrent wild.

22. There Valgrind stands, | the sacred gate,
And behind are the holy doors;
Old is the gate, | but few there are
Who can tell how it tightly is locked.

23. Five hundred doors | and forty there are,
I ween, in Valhall’s walls;
Eight hundred fighters | through one door fare
When to war with the wolf they go.

24. Five hundred rooms | and forty there are
I ween, in Bilskirnir built;
Of all the homes | whose roofs I beheld,
My son’s the greatest meseemed.

25. Heithrun is the goat | who stands by Heerfather’s hall,
And the branches of Lærath she bites;
The pitcher she fills | with the fair, clear mead,
Ne’er fails the foaming drink.

26. Eikthyrnir is the hart | who stands by Heerfather’s hall
And the branches of Lærath he bites;
From his horns a stream | into Hvergelmir drops,
Thence all the rivers run.

27. Sith and Vith, | Sækin and Ækin,
Svol and Fimbulthul, | Gunnthro and Fjorm,
Rin and Rinnandi,
Gipul and Gopul, | Gomul and Geirvimul,
That flow through the fields of the gods;
Thyn and Vin, | Thol and Hol,
Groth and Gunnthorin.

28. Vino is one, | Vegsvin another,
And Thjothnuma a third;
Nyt and Not, | Non and Hron,
Slith and Hrith, | Sylg and Ylg,
Vith and Von, | Vond and Strond,
Gjol and Leipt, | that go among men,
And hence they fall to Hel.

29. Kormt and Ormt | and the Kerlaugs twain
Shall Thor each day wade through,
(When dooms to give | he forth shall go
To the ash-tree Yggdrasil;)
For heaven’s bridge | burns all in flame,
And the sacred waters seethe.

30. Glath and Gyllir, | Gler and Skeithbrimir,
Silfrintopp and Sinir,
Gisl and Falhofnir, | Golltopp and Lettfeti,
On these steeds the gods shall go
When dooms to give | each day they ride
To the ash-tree Yggdrasil.

31. Three roots there are | that three ways run
’Neath the ash-tree Yggdrasil;
’Neath the first lives Hel, | ’neath the second the
frost-giants,
’Neath the last are the lands of men.

32. Ratatosk is the squirrel | who there shall run
On the ash-tree Yggdrasil;
From above the words | of the eagle he bears,
And tells them to Nithhogg beneath.

33. Four harts there are, | that the highest twigs
Nibble with necks bent back;
Dain and Dvalin, | . . . . . .
Duneyr and Dyrathror.

34. More serpents there are | beneath the ash
Than an unwise ape would think;
Goin and Moin, | Grafvitnir’s sons,
Grabak and Grafvolluth,
Ofnir and Svafnir | shall ever, methinks,
Gnaw at the twigs of the tree.

35. Yggdrasil’s ash | great evil suffers,
Far more than men do know;
The hart bites its top, | its trunk is rotting,
And Nithhogg gnaws beneath.

36. Hrist and Mist | bring the horn at my will,
Skeggjold and Skogul;
Hild and Thruth, | Hlokk and Herfjotur,
Gol and Geironul,
Randgrith and Rathgrith | and Reginleif
Beer to the warriors bring.

37. Arvak and Alsvith | up shall drag
Weary the weight of the sun;
But an iron cool | have the kindly gods
Of yore set under their yokes.

38. In front of the sun | does Svalin stand,
The shield for the shining god;
Mountains and sea | would be set in flames
If it fell from before the sun.

39. Skoll is the wolf | that to Ironwood
Follows the glittering god,
And the son of Hrothvitnir, | Hati, awaits
The burning bride of heaven.

40. Out of Ymir’s flesh | was fashioned the earth,
And the ocean out of his blood;
Of his bones the hills, | of his hair the trees,
Of his skull the heavens high.

41. Mithgarth the gods | from his eyebrows made,
And set for the sons of men;
And out of his brain | the baleful clouds
They made to move on high.

42. His the favor of Ull | and of all the gods
Who first in the flames will reach;
For the house can be seen | by the sons of the gods
If the kettle aside were cast.

43. In days of old | did Ivaldi’s sons
Skithblathnir fashion fair,
The best of ships | for the bright god Freyr,
The noble son of Njorth.

44. The best of trees | must Yggdrasil be,
Skithblathnir best of boats;
Of all the gods | is Othin the greatest,
And Sleipnir the best of steeds;
Bilrost of bridges, | Bragi of skalds,
Hobrok of hawks, | and Garm of hounds.

45. To the race of the gods | my face have I raised,
And the wished-for aid have I waked;
For to all the gods | has the message gone
That sit in Ægir's seats,
That drink within Ægir's doors.

46. Grim is my name, | Gangleri am I,
Herjan and Hjalmberi,
Thekk and Thrithi, | Thuth and Uth,
Helblindi and Hor;

47. Sath and Svipal | and Sanngetal,
Herteit and Hnikar,
Bileyg, Baleyg, | Bolverk, Fjolnir,
Grim and Grimnir, | Glapsvith, Fjolsvith.

48. Sithhott, Sithskegg, | Sigfather, Hnikuth,
Allfather, Valfather, | Atrith, Farmatyr:
A single name | have I never had
Since first among men I fared.

49. Grimnir they call me | in Geirröth's hall,
With Asmund Jalk am I;
Kjalar I was | when I went in a sledge,
At the council Thror am I called,
As Vithur I fare to the fight;
Oski, Biflindi, | Jafnhor and Omi,
Gondlir and Harbarth midst gods.

50. I deceived the giant | Sokkmimir old
As Svithur and Svithrir of yore;
Of Mithvitnir's son | the slayer I was
When the famed one found his doom.

51. Drunk art thou, Geirröth, | too much didst thou drink,
. . . . . .
Much hast thou lost, | for help no more
From me or my heroes thou hast.

52. Small heed didst thou take | to all that I told,
And false were the words of thy friends;
For now the sword | of my friend I see,
That waits all wet with blood.

53. Thy sword-pierced body | shall Ygg have soon,
For thy life is ended at last;
The maids are hostile; | now Othin behold!
Now come to me if thou canst!

54. Now am I Othin, | Ygg was I once,
Ere that did they call me Thund;
Vak and Skilfing, | Vofuth and Hroptatyr,
Gaut and Jalk midst the gods;
Ofnir and Svafnir, | and all, methinks,
Are names for none but me.

King Geirröth sat and had his sword on his knee, half drawn from its sheath. But when he heard that Othin was come thither, then he rose up and sought to take Othin from the fire. The sword slipped from his hand, and fell with the hilt down. The king stumbled and fell forward, and the sword pierced him through, and slew him. Then Othin vanished, but Agnar long ruled there as king.

Revision #1
Created 2025-10-17 12:06:44 UTC by Ekospirit
Updated 2025-10-17 12:07:18 UTC by Ekospirit