

GUTHRUNARKVITHA I

GUTHRUNARKVITHA II, EN FORNA

THE SECOND, OR OLD, LAY OF GUTHRUN

King Thjothrek was with Atli, and had lost most of his men. Thjothrek and Guthrun lamented their griefs together. She spoke to him, saying:

1. A maid of maids | my mother bore me, Bright in my bower, | my brothers I loved, Till Gjuki dowered | me with gold, Dowered with gold, | and to Sigurth gave me.
2. So Sigurth rose | o'er Gjuki's sons As the leek grows green | above the grass, Or the stag o'er all | the beasts doth stand, Or as glow-red gold | above silver gray.
3. Till my brothers let me | no longer have The best of heroes | my husband to be; Sleep they could not, | or quarrels settle, Till Sigurth they | at last had slain.
4. From the Thing ran Grani | with thundering feet, But thence did Sigurth | himself come never; Covered with sweat | was the saddle-bearer, Wont the warrior's | weight to bear.
5. Weeping I sought | with Grani to speak, With tear-wet cheeks | for the tale I asked; The head of Grani | was bowed to the grass, The steed knew well | his master was slain.
6. Long I waited | and pondered well Ere ever the king | for tidings I asked. |
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7. His head bowed Gunnar, | but Hogni told The news full sore | of Sigurth slain: "Hewed to death | at our hands he lies, Gotthorm's slayer, | given to wolves.
8. "On the southern road | thou shalt Sigurth see, Where hear thou canst | the ravens cry; The eagles cry | as food they crave, And about thy husband | wolves are howling."
9. "Why dost thou, Hogni, | such a horror Let me hear, | all joyless left? Ravens yet | thy heart shall rend In a land that never | thou hast known."
10. Few the words | of Hogni were, Bitter his heart | from heavy sorrow: "Greater, Guthrun, | thy grief shall be If the ravens so | my heart shall rend."
11. From him who spake | I turned me soon, In the woods to find | what the wolves had left; Tears I had not, | nor wrung my hands, Nor wailing went, | as other women, (When by Sigurth | slain I sat).
12. Never so black | had seemed the night As when in sorrow | by Sigurth I sat; The wolves . . .
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13. | Best of all | methought 'twould be If I my life | could only lose, Or like to birch-wood | burned might be.
14. From the mountain forth | five days I fared, Till Hoalf's hall | so high I saw; Seven half-years | with Thora I stayed, Hokon's daughter, | in Denmark then.
15. With gold she broidered, | to bring me joy, Southern halls | and Danish swans; On the tapestry wove we | warrior's deeds, And the hero's thanes | on our handiwork; (Flashing shields | and fighters armed, Sword-throng, helm-throng, | the host of the king).

16. Sigmund's ship | by the land was sailing, Golden the figure-head, | gay the beaks; On board we wove | the warriors faring, Sigr and Siggeir, | south to Fjon.
17. Then Grimhild asked, | the Gothic queen, Whether willingly | would I |
18. Her needlework cast she | aside, and called Her sons to ask, | with stern resolve, Who amends to their sister | would make for her son, Or the wife requite | for her husband killed.
19. Ready was Gunnar | gold to give, Amends for my hurt, | and Hogni too; Then would she know | who now would go, The horse to saddle, | the wagon to harness, (The horse to ride, | the hawk to fly, And shafts from bows | of yew to shoot).
20. (Valdar, king | of the Danes, was come, With Jarisleif, Eymoth, | and Jarizskar). In like princes | came they all, The long-beard men, | with mantles red, Short their mail-coats, | mighty their helms, Swords at their belts, | and brown their hair.
21. Each to give me | gifts was fain, Gifts to give, | and goodly speech, Comfort so | for my sorrows great To bring they tried, | but I trusted them not.
22. A draught did Grimhild | give me to drink, Bitter and cold; | I forgot my cares; For mingled therein | was magic earth, Ice-cold sea, | and the blood of swine.
23. In the cup were runes | of every kind, Written and reddened, | I could not read them; A heather-fish | from the Haddings' land, An ear uncut, | and the entrails of beasts.
24. Much evil was brewed | within the beer, Blossoms of trees, | and acorns burned, Dew of the hearth, | and holy entrails, The liver of swine,— | all grief to allay.
25. Then I forgot, | when the draught they gave me, There in the hall, | my husband's slaying; On their knees the kings | all three did kneel, Ere she herself | to speak began:
26. "Guthrun, gold | to thee I give, The wealth that once | thy father's was, Rings to have, | and Hlothver's halls, And the hangings all | that the monarch had.
27. "Hunnish women, | skilled in weaving, Who gold make fair | to give thee joy, And the wealth of Buthli | thine shall be, Gold-decked one, | as Atli's wife."

Guthrun spake:

28. "A husband now | I will not have, Nor wife of Brynhild's | brother be; It beseems me not | with Buthli's son Happy to be, | and heirs to bear."

Grimhild spake:

29. "Seek not on men | to avenge thy sorrows, Though the blame at first | with us hath been; Happy shalt be | as if both still lived, Sigurth and Sigmund, | if sons thou bearest."

Guthrun spake:

30. "Grimhild, I may not | gladness find, Nor hold forth hopes | to heroes now, Since once the raven | and ravening wolf Sigurth's heart's-blood | hungrily lapped."

Grimhild spake:

31. "Noblest of birth | is the ruler now I have found for thee, | and foremost of all; Him shalt thou have | while life thou hast, Or husbandless be | if him thou wilt choose not."

Guthrun spake:

32. "Seek not so eagerly | me to send To be a bride | of yon baneful race; On Gunnar first | his wrath shall fall, And the heart will he tear | from Hogni's breast."
33. Weeping Grimhild | heard the words That fate full sore | for her sons foretold, (And mighty woe | for them should work;) "Lands I give thee, | with all that live there, (Vimbjorg is thine, | and Valbjorg too,) Have them forever, | but hear me, daughter."
34. So must I do | as the kings besought, And against my will | for my kinsmen wed; Ne'er with my husband | joy I had, And my sons by my brothers' | fate were saved not.
35. | I could not rest | till of life I had robbed The warrior bold, | the maker of battles.
36. Soon on horseback | each hero was, And the foreign women | in wagons faring; A week through lands | so cold we went, And a second week | the waves we smote, (And a third through lands | that water lacked).
37. The warders now | on the lofty walls Opened the gates, | and in we rode.

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38. Atli woke me, | for ever I seemed Of bitterness full | for my brothers' death.

Atli spake:

39. "Now from sleep | the Norns have waked me With visions of terror,— | to thee will I tell them; Methought thou, Guthrun, | Gjuki's daughter, With poisoned blade | didst pierce my body."

Guthrun spake:

40. "Fire a dream | of steel shall follow And willful pride | one of woman's wrath; A baneful sore | I shall burn from thee, And tend and heal thee, | though hated thou art."

Atli spake:

41. "Of plants I dreamed, | in the garden drooping, That fain would I have | full high to grow; Plucked by the roots, | and red with blood, They brought them hither, | and bade me eat.
42. "I dreamed my hawks | from my hand had flown, Eager for food, | to an evil house; I dreamed their hearts | with honey I ate, Soaked in blood, | and heavy my sorrow.
43. "Hounds I dreamed | from my hand I loosed, Loud in hunger | and pain they howled; Their flesh methought | was eagles' food, And their bodies now | I needs must eat."

Guthrun spake:

44. "Men shall soon | of sacrifice speak, And off the heads | of beasts shall hew; Die they shall | ere day has dawned, A few nights hence, | and the folk shall have them."

Atli spake:

45. "On my bed I sank, | nor slumber sought, Weary with woe,— | full well I remember."
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