

GUTHRUNARKVITHA I

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THE FIRST LAY OF GUTHRUN

Guthrun sat by the dead Sigurth; she did not weep as other women, but her heart was near to bursting with grief. The men and women came to her to console her, but that was not easy to do. It is told of men that Guthrun had eaten of Fafnir's heart, and that she understood the speech of birds. This is a poem about Guthrun.

1. Then did Guthrun | think to die, When she by Sigurth | sorrowing sat; Tears she had not, | nor wrung her hands, Nor ever wailed, | as other women.
2. To her the warriors | wise there came, Longing her heavy | woe to lighten; Grieving could not | Guthrun weep, So sad her heart, | it seemed, would break.
3. Then the wives | of the warriors came, Gold-adorned, | and Guthrun sought; Each one then | of her own grief spoke, The bitterest pain | she had ever borne.
4. Then spake Gjaflaug, | Gjuki's sister: "Most joyless of all | on earth am I; Husbands five | were from me taken, (Two daughters then, | and sisters three,) Brothers eight, | yet I have lived."
5. Grieving could not | Guthrun weep, Such grief she had | for her husband dead, And so grim her heart | by the hero's body.
6. Then Herborg spake, | the queen of the Huns: "I have a greater | grief to tell; My seven sons | in the southern land, And my husband, fell | in fight all eight. (Father and mother | and brothers four Amid the waves | the wind once smote, And the seas crashed through | the sides of the ship.)
7. "The bodies all | with my own hands then I decked for the grave, | and the dead I buried; A half-year brought me | this to bear; And no one came | to comfort me.
8. "Then bound I was, | and taken in war, A sorrow yet | in the same half-year; They bade me deck | and bind the shoes Of the wife of the monarch | every morn.
9. "In jealous rage | her wrath she spake, And beat me oft | with heavy blows; Never a better | lord I knew, And never a woman | worse I found."
10. Grieving could not | Guthrun weep, Such grief she had | for her husband dead, And so grim her heart | by the hero's body.
11. Then spake Gollrond, | Gjuki's daughter: "Thy wisdom finds not, | my foster-mother, The way to comfort | the wife so young." She bade them uncover | the warrior's corpse.
12. The shroud she lifted | from Sigurth, laying His well-loved head | on the knees of his wife: "Look on thy loved one, | and lay thy lips To his as if yet | the hero lived."
13. Once alone | did Guthrun look; His hair all clotted | with blood beheld, The blinded eyes | that once shone bright, The hero's breast | that the blade had pierced.
14. Then Guthrun bent, | on her pillow bowed, Her hair was loosened, | her cheek was hot, And the tears like raindrops | downward ran.

15. Then Guthrun, daughter | of Gjuki, wept, And through her tresses | flowed the tears; And from the court | came the cry of geese, The birds so fair | of the hero's bride.
16. Then Gollrond spake, | the daughter of Gjuki: "Never a greater | love I knew Than yours among | all men on earth; Nowhere wast happy, | at home or abroad, Sister mine, | with Sigurth away."

Guthrun spake:

17. "So was my Sigurth | o'er Gjuki's sons As the spear-leek grown | above the grass, Or the jewel bright | borne on the band, The precious stone | that princes wear.
18. "To the leader of men | I loftier seemed And higher than all | of Herjan's maids; As little now | as the leaf I am On the willow hanging; | my hero is dead.
19. "In his seat, in his bed, | I see no more My heart's true friend; | the fault is theirs, The sons of Gjuki, | for all my grief, That so their sister | sorely weeps.
20. "So shall your land | its people lose As ye have kept | your oaths of yore; Gunnar, no joy | the gold shall give thee, (The rings shall soon | thy slayers be,) Who swarest oaths | with Sigurth once.
21. "In the court was greater | gladness then The day my Sigurth | Grani saddled, And went forth Brynhild's | hand to win, That woman ill, | in an evil hour."
22. Then Brynhild spake, | the daughter of Buthli: "May the witch now husband | and children want Who, Guthrun, loosed | thy tears at last, And with magic today | hath made thee speak."
23. Then Gollrond, daughter | of Gjuki, spake: "Speak not such words, | thou hated woman; Bane of the noble | thou e'er hast been, (Borne thou art | on an evil wave, Sorrow hast brought | to seven kings,) And many a woman | hast loveless made."
24. Then Brynhild, daughter | of Buthli, spake: "Atli is guilty | of all the sorrow, (Son of Buthli | and brother of mine,) When we saw in the hall | of the Hunnish race The flame of the snake's bed | flash round the hero; (For the journey since | full sore have I paid, And ever I seek | the sight to forget.)"
25. By the pillars she stood, | and gathered her strength, From the eyes of Brynhild, | Buthli's daughter, Fire there burned, | and venom she breathed, When the wounds she saw | on Sigurth then.

Guthrun went thence away to a forest in the waste, and journeyed all the way to Denmark, and was there seven half-years with Thora, daughter of Hokon. Brynhild would not live after Sigurth. She had eight of her thralls slain and five serving-women. Then she killed herself with a sword, as is told in the Short Lay of Sigurth.

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