

HARBARTHSLJOTH (THE POEM OF HARBARTH)

Thor was on his way back from a journey in the East, and came to a sound; on the other side of the sound was a ferryman with a boat. Thor called out:

1. "Who is the fellow yonder, | on the farther shore of the sound?"

The ferryman spake:

2. "What kind of a peasant is yon, | that calls o'er the bay?"

Thor spake:

3. "Ferry me over the sound; | I will feed thee therefor in the morning;
A basket I have on my back, | and food therein, none better;
At leisure I ate, | ere the house I left,
Of herrings and porridge, | so plenty I had."

The ferryman spake:

4. "Of thy morning feats art thou proud, | but the future thou knowest not wholly;
Doleful thine home-coming is: | thy mother, methinks, is dead."

Thor spake:

5. "Now hast thou said | what to each must seem
The mightiest grief, | that my mother is dead."

The ferryman spake:

6. "Three good dwellings, | methinks, thou hast not;
Barefoot thou standest, | and wearest a beggar's dress;
Not even hose dost thou have."

Thor spake:

7. "Steer thou hither the boat; | the landing here shall I show
thee;
But whose the craft | that thou keepest on the shore?"

The ferryman spake:

8. "Hildolf is he | who bade me have it,
A hero wise; | his home is at Rathsey's sound.
He bade me no robbers to steer, | nor stealers of steeds,
But worthy men, | and those whom well do I know.
Say now thy name, | if over the sound thou wilt fare."

Thor spake:

9. "My name indeed shall I tell, | though in danger I am,
And all my race; | I am Othin's son,
Meili's brother, | and Magni's father,
The strong one of the gods; | with Thor now speech canst thou
get.
And now would I know | what name thou hast."

The ferryman spake:

10. "Harbarth am I, | and seldom I hide my name."

Thor spake:

11. "Why shouldst thou hide thy name, | if quarrel thou hast
not?"

Harbarth spake:

12. "And though I had a quarrel, | from such as thou art
Yet none the less | my life would I guard,
Unless I be doomed to die."

Thor spake:

13. "Great trouble, methinks, | would it be to come to thee,
To wade the waters across, | and wet my middle;
Weakling, well shall I pay | thy mocking words,
If across the sound I come."

Harbarth spake:

14. "Here shall I stand | and await thee here;
Thou hast found since Hrungrir died | no fiercer man."

Thor spake:

15. "Fain art thou to tell | how with Hrungrir I fought,
The haughty giant, | whose head of stone was made;
And yet I felled him, | and stretched him before me.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?"

Harbarth spake:

16. "Five full winters | with Fjolvar was I,
And dwelt in the isle | that is Algrön called;
There could we fight, | and fell the slain,

Much could we seek, | and maids could master.”

Thor spake:

17. “How won ye success with your women?”

Harbarth spake:

18. “Lively women we had, | if they wise for us were;
Wise were the women we had, | if they kind for us were;
For ropes of sand | they would seek to wind,
And the bottom to dig | from the deepest dale.
Wiser than all | in counsel I was,
And there I slept | by the sisters seven,
And joy full great | did I get from each.
What, Thor, didst thou the while?”

Thor spake:

19. “Thjazi I felled, | the giant fierce,
And I hurled the eyes | of Alvaldi’s son
To the heavens hot above;
Of my deeds the mightiest | marks are these,
That all men since can see.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?”

Harbarth spake:

20. “Much love-craft I wrought | with them who ride by night,
When I stole them by stealth from their husbands;
A giant hard | was Hlebarth, methinks:
His wand he gave me as gift,
And I stole his wits away.”

Thor spake:

21. “Thou didst repay good gifts with evil mind.”

Harbarth spake:

22. "The oak must have | what it shaves from another;
In such things each for himself.
What, Thor, didst thou the while?"

Thor spake:

23. "Eastward I fared, | of the giants I felled
Their ill-working women | who went to the mountain;
And large were the giants' throng | if all were
alive;
No men would there be | in Mithgarth more.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?"

Harbarth spake:

24. "In Valland I was, | and wars I raised,
Princes I angered, | and peace brought never;
The noble who fall | in the fight hath Othin,
And Thor hath the race of the thralls."

Thor spake:

25. "Unequal gifts | of men wouldst thou give to the gods,
If might too much thou shouldst have."

Harbarth spake:

26. "Thor has might enough, | but never a heart;
For cowardly fear | in a glove wast thou fain to crawl,
And there forgot thou wast Thor;
Afraid there thou wast, | thy fear was such,
To fart or sneeze | lest Fjalar should hear."

Thor spake:

27. "Thou womanish Harbarth, | to hell would I smite thee
straight,
Could mine arm reach over the sound."

Harbarth spake:

28. "Wherefore reach over the sound, | since strife we have
none?
What, Thor, didst thou do then?"

Thor spake:

29. "Eastward I was, | and the river I guarded well,
Where the sons of Svarang | sought me there;
Stones did they hurl; | small joy did they have of winning;
Before me there | to ask for peace did they fare.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?"

Harbarth spake:

30. "Eastward I was, | and spake with a certain one,
I played with the linen-white maid, | and met her by stealth;
I gladdened the gold-decked one, | and she granted me joy."

Thor spake:

31. "Full fair was thy woman-finding."

Harbarth spake:

32. "Thy help did I need then, Thor, | to hold the white maid
fast."

Thor spake:

33. "Gladly, had I been there, | my help to thee had been given."

Harbarth spake:

34. "I might have trusted thee then, | didst thou not betray thy troth."

Thor spake:

35. "No heel-biter am I, in truth, | like an old leather shoe in spring."

Harbarth spake:

36. "What, Thor, didst thou the while?"

Thor spake:

37. "In Hlesey the brides | of the Berserkers slew I;
Most evil they were, | and all they betrayed."

Harbarth spake:

38. "Shame didst thou win, | that women thou slewest, Thor."

Thor spake:

39. "She-wolves they were like, | and women but little;
My ship, which well | I had trimmed, did they shake;
With clubs of iron they threatened, | and Thjalfi they drove off.
What, Harbarth, didst thou the while?"

Harbarth spake:

40. "In the host I was | that hither fared,
The banners to raise, | and the spear to redden."

Thor spake:

41. "Wilt thou now say | that hatred thou soughtest to bring
us?"

Harbarth spake:

42. "A ring for thy hand | shall make all right for thee,
As the judge decides | who sets us two at peace."

Thor spake:

43. "Where foundest thou | so foul and scornful a speech?
More foul a speech | I never before have heard."

Harbarth spake:

44. "I learned it from men, | the men so old,
Who dwell in the hills of home."

Thor spake:

45. "A name full good | to heaps of stones thou givest
When thou callest them hills of home."

Harbarth spake:

46. "Of such things speak I so."

Thor spake:

47. "Ill for thee comes | thy keenness of tongue,
If the water I choose to wade;
Louder, I ween, | than a wolf thou cryest,
If a blow of my hammer thou hast."

Harbarth spake:

48. "Sif has a lover at home, | and him shouldst thou meet;
More fitting it were | on him to put forth thy strength."

Thor spake:

49. "Thy tongue still makes thee say | what seems most ill to
me,
Thou witless man! Thou liest, I ween."

Harbarth spake:

50. "Truth do I speak, | but slow on thy way thou art;
Far hadst thou gone | if now in the boat thou hadst fared."

Thor spake:

51. "Thou womanish Harbarth! | here hast thou held me too
long."

Harbarth spake:

52. "I thought not ever | that Asathor would be hindered
By a ferryman thus from faring."

Thor spake:

53. "One counsel I bring thee now: | row hither thy boat;
No more of scoffing; | set Magni's father across."

Harbarth spake:

54. "From the sound go hence; | the passage thou hast not."

Thor spake:

55. "The way now show me, | since thou takest me not o'er the
water."

Harbarth spake:

56. "To refuse it is little, | to fare it is long;
A while to the stock, | and a while to the stone;
Then the road to thy left, | till Verland thou reachest;
And there shall Fjorgyn | her son Thor find,
And the road of her children | she shows him to Othin's realm."

Thor spake:

57. "May I come so far in a day?"

Harbarth spake:

58. "With toil and trouble perchance,
While the sun still shines, | or so I think."

Thor spake:

59. "Short now shall be our speech, | for thou speakest in
mockery only;
The passage thou gavest me not | I shall pay thee if ever we

meet.”

Harbarth spake:

60. “Get hence where every evil thing shall have thee!”

Revision #1

Created 2025-10-17 12:08:42 UTC by Ekospirit

Updated 2025-10-17 12:09:15 UTC by Ekospirit