

HELGAKVITHA

HUNDINGSBANA I

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THE FIRST LAY OF HELGI HUNDINGSBANE

1. In olden days, | when eagles screamed, And holy streams | from heaven's crags fell, Was Helgi then, | the hero-hearted, Borghild's son, | in Bralund born.
2. 'Twas night in the dwelling, | and Norns there came, Who shaped the life | of the lofty one; They bade him most famed | of fighters all And best of princes | ever to be.
3. Mightily wove they | the web of fate, While Bralund's towns | were trembling all; And there the golden | threads they wove, And in the moon's hall | fast they made them.
4. East and west | the ends they hid, In the middle the hero | should have his land; And Neri's kinswoman | northward cast A chain, and bade it | firm ever to be.
5. Once sorrow had | the Ylfings' son, And grief the bride | who the loved one had borne. * * * * * Quoth raven to raven, | on treetop resting, Seeking for food, | "There is something I know.
6. "In mail-coat stands | the son of Sigmund, A half-day old; | now day is here; His eyes flash sharp | as the heroes' are, He is friend of the wolves; | full glad are we."
7. The warrior throng | a ruler thought him, Good times, they said, | mankind should see; The king himself | from battle-press came, To give the prince | a leek full proud.
8. Helgi he named him, | and Hringstathir gave him, Solfjoll, Snæfjoll, | and Sigarsvoll, Hringstoth, Hotun, | and Himinvangar, And a blood-snake bedecked | to Sinfjotli's brother.
9. Mighty he grew | in the midst of his friends, The fair-born elm, | in fortune's glow; To his comrades gold | he gladly gave, The hero spared not | the blood-flecked hoard.
10. Short time for war | the chieftain waited, When fifteen winters | old he was; Hunding he slew, | the hardy wight Who long had ruled | o'er lands and men.
11. Of Sigmund's son | then next they sought Hoard and rings, | the sons of Hunding; They bade the prince | requital pay For booty stolen | and father slain.
12. The prince let not | their prayers avail, Nor gold for their dead | did the kinsmen get; Waiting, he said, | was a mighty storm Of lances gray | and Othin's grimness.
13. The warriors forth | to the battle went, The field they chose | at Logafjoll; Frothi's peace | midst foes they broke, Through the isle went hungrily | Vithrir's hounds.
14. The king then sat, | when he had slain Eyjolf and Alf, | 'neath the eagle-stone; Hjorvarth and Hovarth, | Hunding's sons, The kin of the spear-wielder, | all had he killed.
15. Then glittered light | from Logafjoll, And from the light | the flashes leaped; |
16. | High under helms | on heaven's field; Their byrnies all | with blood were red, And from their spears | the sparks flew forth.

17. Early then | in wolf-wood asked The mighty king | of the southern maid, If with the hero | home would she Come that night; | the weapons clashed.
18. Down from her horse | sprang Hogni's daughter,— The shields were still,— | and spake to the hero: "Other tasks | are ours, methinks, Than drinking beer | with the breaker of rings.
19. "My father has pledged | his daughter fair As bride to Granmar's | son so grim; But, Helgi, I | once Hothbrodd called As fine a king | as the son of a cat.
20. "Yet the hero will come | a few nights hence, | Unless thou dost bid him | the battle-ground seek, Or takest the maid | from the warrior mighty."

Helgi spake:

21. "Fear him not, | though Isung he felled, First must our courage | keen be tried, Before unwilling | thou fare with the knave; Weapons will clash, | if to death I come not."
22. Messengers sent | the mighty one then, By land and by sea, | a host to seek, Store of wealth | of the water's gleam, And men to summon, | and sons of men.
23. "Bid them straightway | seek the ships, And off Brandey | ready to be!" There the chief waited | till thither were come Men by hundreds | from Hethinsey.
24. Soon off Stafnsnes | stood the ships, Fair they glided | and gay with gold; Then Helgi spake | to Hjorleif asking: "Hast thou counted | the gallant host?"
25. The young king answered | the other then: "Long were it to tell | from Tronueyr The long-stemmed ships | with warriors laden That come from without | into Orvasund.
26. | "There are hundreds twelve | of trusty men, But in Hotun lies | the host of the king, Greater by half; | I have hope of battle."
27. The ship's-tents soon | the chieftain struck, And waked the throng | of warriors all; (The heroes the red | of dawn beheld;) And on the masts | the gallant men Made fast the sails | in Varinsfjord.
28. There was beat of oars | and clash of iron, Shield smote shield | as the ships'-folk rowed; Swiftly went | the warrior-laden Fleet of the ruler | forth from the land.
29. So did it sound, | when together the sisters Of Kolga struck | with the keels full long, As if cliffs were broken | with beating surf, |
30. Helgi bade higher | hoist the sails, Nor did the ships'-folk | shun the waves, Though dreadfully | did Ægir's daughters Seek the steeds | of the sea to sink.
31. But from above | did Sigrun brave Aid the men | and all their faring; Mightily came | from the claws of Ron The leader's sea-beast | off Gnipalund.
32. At evening there | in Unavagar Floated the fleet | bedecked full fair; But they who saw | from Svarin's hill, Bitter at heart | the host beheld.
33. Then Gothmund asked, | goodly of birth, | "Who is the monarch | who guides the host, And to the land | the warriors leads?"
34. Sinfjotli answered, | and up on an oar Raised a shield all red | with golden rim; A sea-sentry was he, | skilled to speak, And in words with princes | well to strive.
35. "Say tonight | when you feed the swine, And send your bitches | to seek their swill, That out of the East | have the Ylfings come, Greedy for battle, | to Gnipalund.
36. "There will Hothbrodd | Helgi find, In the midst of the fleet, | and flight he scorns; Often has he | the eagles gorged, Whilst thou at the quern | wert slave-girls kissing."

Gothmund spake:

37. "Hero, the ancient | sayings heed, And bring not lies | to the nobly born. |
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38. "Thou hast eaten | the entrails of wolves, And of thy brothers | the slayer been; Oft
wounds to suck | thy cold mouth sought, And loathed in rocky | dens didst lurk."

Sinfjotli spake:

39. "A witch in Varin's | isle thou wast, A woman false, | and lies didst fashion; Of the mail-
clad heroes | thou wouldst have No other, thou saidst, | save Sinfjotli only.
40. "A Valkyrie wast thou, | loathly witch, Evil and base, | in Allfather's home; The warriors all |
must ever fight, Woman subtle, | for sake of thee.
41. ". | | Nine did we | in Sogunes Of wolf-cubs have; | I
their father was."

Gothmund spake:

42. "Thou didst not father | Fenrir's-wolves, Though older thou art | than all I know; For they
gelded thee | in Gnipalund, The giant-women | at Thorsnes once.
43. "Under houses the stepson | of Siggeir lay, Fain of the wolf's cry | out in the woods; Evil
came then | all to thy hands, When thy brothers' | breasts thou didst redden, Fame didst
thou win | for foulest deeds.
44. "In Bravoll wast thou | Grani's bride, Golden-bitted | and ready to gallop; I rode thee many
| a mile, and down Didst sink, thou giantess, | under the saddle."

Sinfjotli spake:

45. "A brainless fellow | didst seem to be, When once for Gollnir | goats didst milk, And
another time | when as Imth's daughter In rags thou wentest; | wilt longer wrangle?"

Gothmund spake:

46. "Sooner would I | at Frekastein Feed the ravens | with flesh of thine Than send your
bitches | to seek their swill, Or feed the swine; | may the fiends take you!"

Helgi spake:

47. "Better, Sinfjotli, | thee 'twould beseem Battle to give | and eagles to gladden, Than vain
and empty | words to utter, Though ring-breakers oft | in speech do wrangle.
48. "Good I find not | the sons of Granmar, But for heroes 'tis seemly | the truth to speak; At
Moinshemar | proved the men That hearts for the wielding | of swords they had."
49. Mightily then | they made to run Sviputh and Sveggjuth | to Solheimar; (By dewy dales |
and chasms dark, Mist's horse shook | where the men went by;) The king they found | at
his courtyard gate, And told him the foeman | fierce was come.
50. Forth stood Hothbrodd, | helmed for battle, Watched the riding | of his warriors;
| "Why are the Hniflungs | white with fear?"

Gothmund spake:

51. "Swift keels lie | hard by the land, (Mast-ring harts | and mighty yards, Wealth of shields | and well-planed oars;) The king's fair host, | the Ylfings haughty; Fifteen bands | to land have fared, But out in Sogn | are seven thousand.
52. "At anchor lying | off Gnipalund Are fire-beasts black, | all fitted with gold; There wait most | of the foeman's men, Nor will Helgi long | the battle delay."

Hothbrodd spake:

53. "Bid the horses run | to the Reginthing, Melnir and Mylnir | to Myrkwood now, (And Sporvitnir | to Sparinsheith;) Let no man seek | henceforth to sit Who the flame of wounds | knows well to wield.
54. "Summon Hogni, | the sons of Hring, Atli and Yngvi | and Alf the Old; Glad they are | of battle ever; Against the Volsungs | let us go."
55. Swift as a storm | there smote together The flashing blades | at Frekastein; Ever was Helgi, | Hunding's slayer, First in the throng | where warriors fought; (Fierce in battle, | slow to fly, Hard the heart | of the hero was.)
56. From heaven there came | the maidens helmed,— The weapon-clang grew,— | who watched o'er the king; Spake Sigrun fair,— | the wound-givers flew, And the horse of the giantess | raven's-food had:—
57. "Hail to thee, hero! | full happy with men, Offspring of Yngvi, | shalt ever live, For thou the fearless | foe hast slain Who to many the dread | of death had brought.
58. "Warrior, well | for thyself hast won Red rings bright | and the noble bride; Both now, warrior, | thine shall be, Hogni's daughter | and Hringstathir, Wealth and triumph; | the battle wanes."

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