

HYMISKVITHA (THE LAY OF HYMIR)

1. Of old the gods | made feast together,
And drink they sought | ere sated they were;
Twigs they shook, | and blood they tried:
Rich fare in Ægir's | hall they found.
2. The mountain-dweller | sat merry as boyhood,
But soon like a blinded | man he seemed;
The son of Ygg | gazed in his eyes:
"For the gods a feast | shalt thou forthwith get."
3. The word-wielder toil | for the giant worked,
And so revenge | on the gods he sought;
He bade Sif's mate | the kettle bring:
"Therein for ye all | much ale shall I brew."
4. The far-famed ones | could find it not,
And the holy gods | could get it nowhere;
Till in truthful wise | did Tyr speak forth,
And helpful counsel | to Hlorrithi gave.
5. "There dwells to the east | of Elivagar
Hymir the wise | at the end of heaven;
A kettle my father | fierce doth own,
A mighty vessel | a mile in depth."

Thor spake:

6. "May we win, dost thou think, | this whirler of water?"

Tyr spake:

"Aye, friend, we can, | if cunning we are."

7. Forward that day | with speed they fared,
From Asgarth came they | to Egil's home;
The goats with horns | bedecked he guarded;
Then they sped to the hall | where Hymir dwelt.
8. The youth found his grandam, | that greatly he loathed,
And full nine hundred | heads she had;
But the other fair | with gold came forth,
And the bright-browed one | brought beer to her son.
9. "Kinsman of giants, | beneath the kettle
Will I set ye both, | ye heroes bold;
For many a time | my dear-loved mate
To guests is wrathful | and grim of mind."
10. Late to his home | the misshapen Hymir,
The giant harsh, | from his hunting came;
The icicles rattled | as in he came,
For the fellow's chin-forest | frozen was.
11. "Hail to thee, Hymir! | good thoughts mayst thou have;
Here has thy son | to thine hall now come;
(For him have we waited, | his way was long;)
And with him fares | the foeman of Hroth,
The friend of mankind, | and Veur they call him.
12. "See where under | the gable they sit!
Behind the beam | do they hide themselves."
The beam at the glance | of the giant broke,
And the mighty pillar | in pieces fell.
13. Eight fell from the ledge, | and one alone,
The hard-hammered kettle, | of all was whole;
Forth came they then, | and his foes he sought,
The giant old, | and held with his eyes.
14. Much sorrow his heart | foretold when he saw
The giantess' foeman | come forth on the floor;
Then of the steers | did they bring in three;
Their flesh to boil | did the giant bid.
15. By a head was each | the shorter hewed,
And the beasts to the fire | straight they bore;
The husband of Sif, | ere to sleep he went,
Alone two oxen | of Hymir's ate.

16. To the comrade hoary | of Hrungrir then
Did Hlorrithi's meal | full mighty seem;
"Next time at eve | we three must eat
The food we have | as the hunting's spoil."

17. |
Fain to row on the sea | was Veur, he said,
If the giant bold | would give him bait.

Hymir spake:

18. "Go to the herd, | if thou hast it in mind,
Thou slayer of giants, | thy bait to seek;
For there thou soon | mayst find, methinks,
Bait from the oxen | easy to get."

19. Swift to the wood | the hero went,
Till before him an ox | all black he found;
From the beast the slayer | of giants broke
The fortress high | of his double horns.

Hymir spake:

20. "Thy works, methinks, | are worse by far,
Thou steerer of ships, | than when still thou sittest."
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21. The lord of the goats | bade the ape-begotten
Farther to steer | the steed of the rollers;
But the giant said | that his will, forsooth,
Longer to row | was little enough.

22. Two whales on his hook | did the mighty Hymir
Soon pull up | on a single cast;
In the stern the kinsman | of Othin sat,
And Veur with cunning | his cast prepared.

23. The warder of men, | the worm's destroyer,
Fixed on his hook | the head of the ox;
There gaped at the bait | the foe of the gods,
The girdler of all | the earth beneath.

24. The venomous serpent | swiftly up
To the boat did Thor, | the bold one, pull;
With his hammer the loathly | hill of the hair
Of the brother of Fenrir | he smote from above.

25. The monsters roared, | and the rocks resounded,
And all the earth | so old was shaken;
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Then sank the fish | in the sea forthwith.

26. |
Joyless as back | they rowed was the giant;
Speechless did Hymir | sit at the oars,
With the rudder he sought | a second wind.

Hymir spake:

27. "The half of our toil | wilt thou have with me,
And now make fast | our goat of the flood;
Or home wilt thou bear | the whales to the house,
Across the gorge | of the wooded glen?"

28. Hlorrithi stood | and the stem he gripped,
And the sea-horse with water | awash he lifted;
Oars and bailer | and all he bore
With the surf-swine home | to the giant's house.

29. His might the giant | again would match,
For stubborn he was, | with the strength of Thor;
None truly strong, | though stoutly he rowed,
Would he call save one | who could break the cup.

30. Hlorrithi then, | when the cup he held,
Struck with the glass | the pillars of stone;
As he sat the posts | in pieces he shattered,
Yet the glass to Hymir | whole they brought.

31. But the loved one fair | of the giant found
A counsel true, | and told her thought:
"Smite the skull of Hymir, | heavy with food,
For harder it is | than ever was glass."

32. The goats' mighty ruler | then rose on his knee,
And with all the strength | of a god he struck;
Whole was the fellow's | helmet-stem,

But shattered the wine-cup | rounded was.

Hymir spake:

33. "Fair is the treasure | that from me is gone,
Since now the cup | on my knees lies shattered;"
So spake the giant: | "No more can I say
In days to be, | 'Thou art brewed, mine ale.'

34. "Enough shall it be | if out ye can bring
Forth from our house | the kettle here."
Tyr then twice | to move it tried,
But before him the kettle | twice stood fast.

35. The father of Mothi | the rim seized firm,
And before it stood | on the floor below;
Up on his head | Sif's husband raised it,
And about his heels | the handles clattered.

36. Not long had they fared, | ere backwards looked
The son of Othin, | once more to see;
From their caves in the east | beheld he coming
With Hymir the throng | of the many-headed.

37. He stood and cast | from his back the kettle,
And Mjollnir, the lover | of murder, he wielded;
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So all the whales | of the waste he slew.

38. Not long had they fared | ere one there lay
Of Hlorrithi's goats | half-dead on the ground;
In his leg the pole-horse | there was lame;
The deed the evil | Loki had done.

39. But ye all have heard,— | for of them who have
The tales of the gods, | who better can tell?—
What prize he won | from the wilderness-dweller,
Who both his children | gave him to boot.

40. The mighty one came | to the council of gods,
And the kettle he had | that Hymir's was;
So gladly their ale | the gods could drink
In Ægir's hall | at the autumn-time.

