

ODDRUNARGRATR

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THE LAMENT OF ODDRUN

Heithrek was the name of a king, whose daughter was called Borgny. Vilmund was the name of the man who was her lover. She could not give birth to a child until Oddrun, Atli's sister, had come to her; Oddrun had been beloved of Gunnar, son of Gjuki. About this story is the following poem.

1. I have heard it told | in olden tales How a maiden came | to Morningland; No one of all | on earth above To Heithrek's daughter | help could give.
2. This Oddrun learned, | the sister of Atli, That sore the maiden's | sickness was; The bit-bearer forth | from his stall she brought, And the saddle laid | on the steed so black.
3. She let the horse go | o'er the level ground, Till she reached the hall | that loftily rose, (And in she went | from the end of the hall;) From the weary steed | the saddle she took; Hear now the speech | that first she spake:
4. "What news on earth, | Or what has happened | in Hunland now?"

A serving-maid spake:

"Here Borgny lies | in bitter pain,
Thy friend, and, Oddrun, | thy help would find."

Oddrun spake:

5. "Who worked this woe | for the woman thus, Or why so sudden | is Borgny sick?"

The serving-maid spake:

"Vilmund is he, | the heroes' friend,
Who wrapped the woman | in bedclothes warm,
(For winters five, | yet her father knew not)."

6. Then no more | they spake, methinks; She went at the knees | of the woman to sit; With magic Oddrun | and mightily Oddrun Chanted for Borgny | potent charms.
7. At last were born | a boy and girl, Son and daughter | of Hogni's slayer; Then speech the woman | so weak began, Nor said she aught | ere this she spake:
8. "So may the holy | ones thee help, Frigg and Freyja | and favoring gods, As thou hast saved me | from sorrow now."

Oddrun spake:

9. "I came not hither | to help thee thus Because thou ever | my aid didst earn; I fulfilled the oath | that of old I swore, That aid to all | I should ever bring, (When they shared the wealth | the warriors had)."

Borgny spake:

10. "Wild art thou, Oddrun, | and witless now, That so in hatred | to me thou speakest; I followed thee | where thou didst fare, As we had been born | of brothers twain."

Oddrun spake:

11. "I remember the evil | one eve thou spakest, When a draught I gave | to Gunnar then; Thou didst say that never | such a deed By maid was done | save by me alone."
12. Then the sorrowing woman | sat her down To tell the grief | of her troubles great.
13. "Happy I grew | in the hero's hall As the warriors wished, | and they loved me well; Glad I was | of my father's gifts, For winters five, | while my father lived.
14. "These were the words | the weary king, Ere he died, | spake last of all: He bade me with red gold | dowered to be, And to Grimhild's son | in the South be wedded.
15. "But Brynhild the helm | he bade to wear, A wish-maid bright | he said she should be; For a nobler maid | would never be born On earth, he said, | if death should spare her.
16. "At her weaving Brynhild | sat in her bower, Lands and folk | alike she had; The earth and heaven | high resounded When Fafnir's slayer | the city saw.
17. "Then battle was fought | with the foreign swords, And the city was broken | that Brynhild had; Not long thereafter, | but all too soon, Their evil wives | full well she knew.
18. "Woeful for this | her vengeance was, As so we learned | to our sorrow all; In every land | shall all men hear How herself at Sigurth's | side she slew.
19. "Love to Gunnar | then I gave, To the breaker of rings, | as Brynhild might; To Atli rings | so red they offered, And mighty gifts | to my brother would give.
20. "Fifteen dwellings | fain would he give For me, and the burden | that Grani bore; But Atli said | he would never receive Marriage gold | from Gjuki's son.
21. "Yet could we not | our love o'ercome, And my head I laid | on the hero's shoulder; Many there were | of kinsmen mine Who said that together | us they had seen.
22. "Atli said | that never I Would evil plan, | or ill deed do; But none may this | of another think, Or surely speak, | when love is shared.
23. "Soon his men | did Atli send, In the murky wood | on me to spy; Thither they came | where they should not come, Where beneath one cover | close we lay.
24. "To the warriors ruddy | rings we offered, That nought to Atli | e'er they should say; But swiftly home | they hastened thence, And eager all | to Atli told.
25. "But close from Guthrun | kept they hid What first of all | she ought to have known.
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26. "Great was the clatter | of gilded hoofs When Gjuki's sons | through the gateway rode; The heart they hewed | from Hogni then, And the other they cast | in the serpents' cave.
27. "The hero wise | on his harp then smote, | For help from me | in his heart yet hoped The high-born king, | might come to him.
28. "Alone was I gone | to Geirmund then, The draught to mix | and ready to make; Sudden I heard | from Hlesey clear How in sorrow the strings | of the harp resounded.

29. "I bade the serving-maids | ready to be, For I longed the hero's | life to save; Across the sound | the boats we sailed, Till we saw the whole | of Atli's home.
 30. "Then crawling the evil | woman came, Atli's mother— | may she ever rot! And hard she bit | to Gunnar's heart, So I could not help | the hero brave.
 31. "Oft have I wondered | how after this, Serpents'-bed goddess! | I still might live, For well I loved | the warrior brave, The giver of swords, | as my very self.
 32. "Thou didst see and listen, | the while I said The mighty grief | that was mine and theirs; Each man lives | as his longing wills,— Oddrun's lament | is ended now."
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