

SIGRDRIFUMOL

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THE BALLAD OF THE VICTORY-BRINGER

Sigurth rode up on Hindarfjoll and turned southward toward the land of the Franks. On the mountain he saw a great light, as if fire were burning, and the glow reached up to heaven. And when he came thither, there stood a tower of shields, and above it was a banner. Sigurth went into the shield-tower, and saw that a man lay there sleeping with all his war-weapons. First he took the helm from his head, and then he saw that it was a woman. The mail-coat was as fast as if it had grown to the flesh. Then he cut the mail-coat from the head-opening downward, and out to both the arm-holes. Then he took the mail-coat from her, and she awoke, and sat up and saw Sigurth, and said:

1. "What bit through the byrnie? | how was broken my sleep? Who made me free | of the fetters pale?"

He answered:

"Sigmund's son, | with Sigurth's sword,
That late with flesh | hath fed the ravens."

Sigurth sat beside her and asked her name. She took a horn full of mead and gave him a memory-draught.

2. "Hail, day! | Hail, sons of day! And night and her daughter now! Look on us here | with loving eyes, That waiting we victory win.
3. "Hail to the gods! | Ye goddesses, hail, And all the generous earth! Give to us wisdom | and goodly speech, And healing hands, life-long.
4. "Long did I sleep, | my slumber was long, And long are the griefs of life; Othin decreed | that I could not break The heavy spells of sleep."

Her name was Sigrdrifa, and she was a Valkyrie. She said that two kings fought in battle; one was called Hjalmgunnar, an old man but a mighty warrior, and Othin had promised him the victory, and

The other was Agnar, | brother of Autha,
None he found | who fain would shield him.

Sigrdrifa slew Hjalmgunnar in the battle, and Othin pricked her with the sleep-thorn in punishment for this, and said that she should never thereafter win victory in battle, but that she should be wedded. "And I said to him that I had made a vow in my turn, that I would never marry a man who

knew the meaning of fear.” Sigurth answered and asked her to teach him wisdom, if she knew of what took place in all the worlds. Sigdrifa said:

5. “Beer I bring thee, | tree of battle, Mingled of strength | and mighty fame; Charms it holds | and healing signs, Spells full good, | and gladness-runes.”

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6. Winning-runes learn, | if thou longest to win, And the runes on thy sword-hilt write; Some on the furrow, | and some on the flat, And twice shalt thou call on Tyr.
7. Ale-runes learn, | that with lies the wife Of another betray not thy trust; On the horn thou shalt write, | and the backs of thy hands, And Need shalt mark on thy nails. Thou shalt bless the draught, | and danger escape, And cast a leek in the cup; (For so I know | thou never shalt see Thy mead with evil mixed.)
8. Birth-runes learn, | if help thou wilt lend, The babe from the mother to bring; On thy palms shalt write them, | and round thy joints, And ask the fates to aid.
9. Wave-runes learn, | if well thou wouldst shelter The sail-steeds out on the sea; On the stem shalt thou write, | and the steering-blade, And burn them into the oars; Though high be the breakers, | and black the waves, Thou shalt safe the harbor seek.
10. Branch-runes learn, | if a healer wouldst be, And cure for wounds wouldst work; On the bark shalt thou write, | and on trees that be With boughs to the eastward bent.
11. Speech-runes learn, | that none may seek To answer harm with hate; Well he winds | and weaves them all, And sets them side by side, At the judgment-place, | when justice there The folk shall fairly win.
12. Thought-runes learn, | if all shall think Thou art keenest minded of men.

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13. Them Hropt arranged, | and them he wrote, And them in thought he made, Out of the draught | that down had dropped From the head of Heithdraupnir, And the horn of Hoddrofnir.
14. On the mountain he stood | with Brimir’s sword, On his head the helm he bore; Then first the head | of Mim spoke forth, And words of truth it told.

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15. He bade write on the shield | before the shining goddess, On Arvak’s ear, | and on Alsvith’s hoof, On the wheel of the car | of Hrungnir’s killer, On Sleipnir’s teeth, | and the straps of the sledge.
16. On the paws of the bear, | and on Bragi’s tongue, On the wolf’s claws bared, | and the eagle’s beak, On bloody wings, | and bridge’s end, On freeing hands | and helping foot-prints.
17. On glass and on gold, | and on goodly charms, In wine and in beer, | and on well-loved seats, On Gungnir’s point, | and on Grani’s breast, On the nails of Norns, | and the night-owl’s beak.

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18. Shaved off were the runes | that of old were written, And mixed with the holy mead, And sent on ways so wide; So the gods had them, | so the elves got them, And some for the Wanæs so wise, And some for mortal men.
19. Beech-runes are there, | birth-runes are there, And all the runes of ale, And the magic runes of might; Who knows them rightly | and reads them true, Has them himself to help; Ever they aid, Till the gods are gone.

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Brynhild spake:

20. "Now shalt thou choose, | for the choice is given, Thou tree of the biting blade; Speech or silence, | 'tis thine to say, Our evil is destined all."

Sigurth spake:

21. "I shall not flee, | though my fate be near, I was born not a coward to be; Thy loving word | for mine will I win, As long as I shall live."

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22. Then first I rede thee, | that free of guilt Toward kinsmen ever thou art; No vengeance have, | though they work thee harm, Reward after death thou shalt win.
23. Then second I rede thee, | to swear no oath If true thou knowest it not; Bitter the fate | of the breaker of troth, And poor is the wolf of his word.
24. Then third I rede thee, | that thou at the Thing Shalt fight not in words with fools; For the man unwise | a worser word Than he thinks doth utter oft.
25. Ill it is | if silent thou art, A coward born men call thee, And truth mayhap they tell; Seldom safe is fame, Unless wide renown be won; On the day thereafter | send him to death, Let him pay the price of his lies.
26. Then fourth I rede thee, | if thou shalt find A wily witch on thy road, It is better to go | than her guest to be, Though night enfold thee fast.
27. Eyes that see | need the sons of men Who fight in battle fierce; Oft witches evil | sit by the way, Who blade and courage blunt.
28. Then fifth I rede thee, | though maidens fair Thou seest on benches sitting, Let the silver of kinship | not rob thee of sleep, And the kissing of women beware.
29. Then sixth I rede thee, | if men shall wrangle, And ale-talk rise to wrath, No words with a drunken | warrior have, For wine steals many men's wits.
30. Brawls and ale | full oft have been An ill to many a man, Death for some, | and sorrow for some; Full many the woes of men.
31. Then seventh I rede thee, | if battle thou seekest With a foe that is full of might; It is better to fight | than to burn alive In the hall of the hero rich.
32. Then eighth I rede thee, | that evil thou shun, And beware of lying words; Take not a maid, | nor the wife of a man, Nor lure them on to lust.
33. Then ninth I rede thee: | burial render If thou findest a fallen corpse, Of sickness dead, | or dead in the sea, Or dead of weapons' wounds.

34. A bath shalt thou give them | who corpses be, And hands and head shalt wash; Wipe them and comb, | ere they go in the coffin, And pray that they sleep in peace.
35. Then tenth I rede thee, | that never thou trust The word of the race of wolves, (If his brother thou broughtest to death, Or his father thou didst fell;) Often a wolf | in a son there is, Though gold he gladly takes.
36. Battle and hate | and harm, methinks, Full seldom fall asleep; Wits and weapons | the warrior needs If boldest of men he would be.
37. Then eleventh I rede thee, | that wrath thou shun, And treachery false with thy friends; Not long the leader's | life shall be, For great are the foes he faces.
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