

## GUÐRÚNARKVIÐA II, HIN FORNA (The Second, or “Old Lay” of Guðrún)

### Bellows’ Introduction (1936)

It has already been pointed out (introductory note to *Guthrunarkviða I*) that the tradition of Guthrun's lament was known wherever the Sigurth story existed, and that this lament was probably one of the earliest parts of the legend to assume verse form. Whether it reached the North as verse cannot, of course, be determined, but it is at least possible that this was the case, and in any event it is clear that by the tenth and eleventh centuries there were a number of Norse poems with Guthrun's lament as the central theme. Two of these are included in the Eddic collection, the second one being unquestionably much the older. It is evidently the poem referred to by the annotator in the prose note following the *Brot* as "the old Guthrun lay," and its character and state of preservation have combined to lead most commentators to date it as early as the first half of the tenth century, whereas *Guthrunarkviða I* belongs a hundred years later.

The poem has evidently been preserved in rather bad shape, with a number of serious omissions and some interpolations, but in just this form it lay before the compilers of the *Volsungasaga*, who paraphrased it faithfully, and quoted five of its stanzas. The interpolations are on the whole unimportant; the omissions, while they obscure the sense of certain passages, do not destroy the essential continuity of the poem, in which Guthrun reviews her sorrows from the death of Sigurth through the slaying of her brothers to Atli's dreams foretelling the death of their sons. It is, indeed, the only Norse poem of the Sigurth cycle antedating the year 1000 which has come down to us in anything approaching complete form; the *Reginismol*, *Fafnismol*, and *Sigrdrifumol* are all collections of fragments, only a short bit of the "long" Sigurth lay remains, and the others--*Gripisspo*, *Guthrunarkviða I* and *III*, *Sigurtharkviða en skamma*, *Helreith Brynhildar*, *Oddrunargratr*, *Guthrunarhvot*, *Hamthesmol*, and the two Atli lays—are all generally dated from the eleventh and even the twelfth centuries.

An added reason for believing that *Guthrunarkviða II* traces its origin back to a lament which reached the North from Germany in verse form is the absence of most characteristic Norse additions to the narrative, except in minor details. Sigurth is slain in the forest, as "German men say" (cf. *Brot*, concluding prose); the urging of Guthrun by her mother and brothers to become Atli's wife, the slaying of the Gjukungs (here only intimated, for at that point something seems to have been lost), and Guthrun's prospective revenge on Atli, all belong directly to the German tradition (cf. introductory note to *Gripisspo*).

In the *Codex Regius* the poem is entitled simply *Guthrunarkviða*; the numeral has been added in nearly all editions to distinguish this poem from the other two Guthrun lays, and the phrase "the old" is borrowed from the annotator's comment in the prose note at the end of the *Brot*.

### Hollander’s Introduction (1936)

In this lay we may recognize the prototype of the various other “laments” of the Collection. It is unquestionably older than most—or all—of the, as is attested not only by its title (see *Brot af Sigurþarkviða*, Concluding Prose), but also by the fact that it contains, in organic connection, the themes from which most of the other lays are derived. Moreover, its legendary form shows an early stage of the development of the Sigurth legend—Brynhild is not mentioned at all, and Gunnar's and Hogni's jealousy of Sigurth is the cause of his death. There are, to be sure, some later elements, too.

The greater age (early tenth century?) may also account for the disordered and fragmentary condition of the text. The end of the poem and a number of other stanzas are missing completely. Also, there are remarkable discrepancies which it is hopeless to attempt to reconcile: the introduction of dialogues between Guthrún and Atli on the one hand and Guthrún and Grímhild on the other, for instance, or the elaborate description of the drink of forgetfulness, which has no recognizable effect on Guthrún's memory of Sigurth and of the misdeeds of her brothers. It is just as futile to expect geographical consistency in the descriptions of Guthrún's wanderings and her journey to Atli's court. In fact, it may fairly be questioned whether the lay as we have it really is of one piece or not, rather, patched together from an imperfect recollection of two or more lays. But making allowances for the poor transmission, there are some vigorous passages and some touching lines in the poem, especially in Guthrún's plaint over Sigurth.

The *Volsunga saga* cites a couple of stanzas of the lay in full, and paraphrases the whole rather closely. The first five stanzas are there given as a monologue, the remainder is treated as a narrative. The Collector's statement that the lay is Guthrún's plaint addressed to Thjóðrek may be derived from *Guðrúnarkviða III*, St.4. But in all likelihood the poem was conceived as a monologue.

## OUTLINE

[lines numbers according to Bellows]

P1	Guthrún laments with Theodoric
1-2	Guthrún happy until her brothers grow jealous of Sigurd's wealth
3	Sigurth slain in the forest at the Thing
4-5	Grani runs to Guthrún
6	Guthrún confronts her brothers:
7-8	Hogni confesses the crime
9	Guthrún's curse and lamentation
10	Hogni repents
11-13	Guthrún sits by Sigurd's body, unweeping, wishing to die
14	Guthrún fares to Hoalf's hall in Denmark
15-16	Embroidering of Guthrún's tapestry
17-19	Grímhild fetches Guthrún home to be given to Atli
20-21	Emissaries come with gifts from Atli for Guthrún
22-25	Grímhild gives Guthrún a potion of forgetfulness
26-27	Guthrún given her bridal dowry
28-31	Guthrún argues with Grímhild about the match
32	Of Guthrún's prophecy
33	Grímhild persists
34-[35]	Guthrún capitulates
36-37	Guthrún travels to Atli's hall
38-39	Atli's 1 <sup>st</sup> Bad Dream
40	Guthrún interprets Atli's 1 <sup>st</sup> dream
41-43	Atli's 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bad Dream
44	Guthrún interprets Atli's 2 <sup>nd</sup> dream
45	Atli begins to reply, the MS ends

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>King Theodric was with Atli, and had there lost the greater number of his men. Theodric and Gudrun mutually bewailed their afflictions. She related to him and said:</p> <p>1. A maid above all maids I was; my mother reared me Bright in her bower; my brothers I much loved, Until me Giuki, with gold adorned, With gold adorned, to Sigurd gave.</p> <p>2. Such was Sigurd above Giuki's sons, As the green leek is, springing from the grass, Or the high-limbed hart above the savage beasts, Or gleed-red gold above grey silver.</p>	<p>[P1] King Thjothrek<sup>4</sup> was with Atli, and had lost most of his men. Thjothrek and Guthrun lamented their griefs together. She spoke to him, saying:</p> <p>1. A maid of maids   my mother bore me, Bright in my bower,   my brothers I loved, Till Gjuki dowered   me with gold, Dowered with gold,   and to Sigurth gave me.</p> <p>2. So Sigurth rose   o'er Gjuki's sons As the leek grows green   above the grass,<sup>5</sup> Or the stag o'er all   the beasts doth stand, Or as glow-red gold   above silver gray.</p>	<p>Thjóthrek<sup>62</sup> had been with Atli, and had there lost most of his men.<sup>63</sup> Thjóthrek and Guthrún rehearsed their sorrows to one another. <i>She spoke to him and said:</i></p> <p>1. Me, fairest of maids, my mother reared; In bower, happy, my brothers I loved, Till that Gjúki with gold me dowered, With gold me dowered and gave me to Sigurth.</p> <p>2. Was my Sigurth 'mongst the sons of Gjúki Like the garlic grown the grass above, Or the high-legged hart the hinds among,<sup>64</sup> Or glow-red gold amidst grey silver.</p>

<p>3. Until my brothers the possession grudged me Of a consort to all superior. They could not sleep, nor on affairs deliberate, Before they Sigurd had caused to die.</p> <p>4. Grani to the assembly ran, his tramp was to be heard; But Sigurd then himself came not. All the saddle-beasts were splashed with blood, And with sweating faint, from the murderers.</p> <p>5. Weeping I went to talk to Grani, With humid cheeks, I prayed the steed to tell: Then Grani shuddered, in the grass bowed down his head. The steed knew that his master was no more.</p> <p>6. Long I wandered, long was my mind distracted, Ere of the people's guardian I inquired for my king.</p> <p>7. Gunnar hung his head, but Hogni told me Of Sigurd's cruel death. "Beyond the river slaughtered lies Guthorm's murderer, and to the wolves given.</p> <p>8. Yonder behold Sigurd, towards the south, There thou wilt hear the ravens croak, The eagles scream, in their feast exulting; The wolves howling round thy consort."</p> <p>9. "Why wilt thou, Hogni! To a joyless being such miseries recount? May thy heart by ravens be torn and scattered over the wide world, / Rather than thou shouldst walk with men."</p> <p>10. Hogni answered, for once cast down, From his cheerful mood by intense trouble: "Gudrun! thou wouldst have greater cause to weep, If the ravens should tear my heart."</p> <p>11. Alone I turned from that interview To the wolves' scattered leavings. No sigh I uttered, nor with my hands beat, Nor wailed, as other women, When I heartbroken sat by Sigurd.</p> <p>12. Night seemed to me of blackest darkness, When I sorrowing sat by Sigurd.</p> <p>Better by far it seemed to me</p>	<p>3. Till my brothers let me   no longer have The best of heroes   my husband to be; Sleep they could not,   or quarrels settle, Till Sigurth they   at last had slain.</p> <p>4. From the Thing ran Grani<sup>6</sup>   with thundering feet, But thence did Sigurth   himself come never; Covered with sweat   was the saddle-bearer, Wont the warrior's   weight to bear.</p> <p>5. Weeping I sought   with Grani to speak, With tear-wet cheeks   for the tale I asked; The head of Grani   was bowed to the grass, The steed knew well   his master was slain.</p> <p>6. Long I waited   and pondered well Ere ever the king   for tidings I asked.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>7. His head bowed Gunnar,   but Hogni told The news full sore   of Sigurth slain: "Hewed to death   at our hands he lies, Gotthorm's slayer,<sup>8</sup>   given to wolves.</p> <p>8. "On the southern road   thou shalt Sigurth see, Where hear thou canst   the ravens cry; The eagles cry   as food they crave, And about thy husband   wolves are howling."</p> <p>9. "Why dost thou, Hogni,   such a horror Let me hear,   all joyless left? Ravens yet   thy heart shall rend In a land that never   thou hast known."</p> <p>10. Few the words   of Hogni were, Bitter his heart   from heavy sorrow: "Greater, Guthrun,   thy grief shall be If the ravens so   my heart shall rend."</p> <p>11. From him who spake   I turned me soon, In the woods to find   what the wolves had left; Tears I had not,   nor wrung my bands, Nor wailing went,   as other women, (When by Sigurth   slain I sat).<sup>9</sup></p> <p>12. Never so black   had seemed the night As when in sorrow   by Sigurth I sat; The wolves [were howling   on all the ways, The eagles cried as their food they craved.]<sup>10</sup></p> <p>13. [Long did I bide,   my brothers awaiting.]<sup>11</sup> Best of all   methought 'twould be</p>	<p>3. Then Gjúki's sons did grudge me this— That my husband was mightier than they; Nor could they sleep nor sit in judgment, Before Sigurth was slain by them.</p> <p>4. Back galloped Grani, his gait I knew,<sup>65</sup> But still Sigurth himself came not; With sweat were wet the saddle horses, Oft made to moil, which the murderers rode.</p> <p>5. To Grani weeping went I to speak, With tear-wet cheeks tried his tale to gather. His head drooped Grani to the grass adown: He knew, no longer lived his master.</p> <p>6. Long I tarried, at a loss in my mind, Ere after him I asked the king.</p> <p>7. His head drooped Gunnar; but Hogni told me Of my lord Sigurth's sorrowful death: "By the sword slain lies he who slew Guthorm,<sup>66</sup> To the ravens given, beyond the Rhine.<sup>67</sup></p> <p>8. "In Southland seek thou Sigurth's body, There mayst thou hear the hoarse ravens, The cry of eagles, eager for meat, The howl of wolves thy husband about."</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Guthrún said:)</i></p> <p>9. "Thou art hardy, Hogni, thus hatefully Sigurth's widow this woe to tell: Should ravens rive thy ruthless heart, In faraway lands alone should'st die."<sup>68</sup></p> <p>10. Answered Hogni only thuswise, Grim in his mind, with gloomy words: "But greater grew, Guthrún, thy woe If ravens rived my ruthless heart."<sup>69</sup></p> <p>11. Then turned I me from talk away, In the woods to gather what wolves had left; I whimpered not, nor my hands did wring, Nor wept, either, as women else, As I sate sorrowing over Sigurth's corpse.</p> <p>12. Dark night and moonless to me it seemed, As in sorrow I sate over Sigurth's corpse. (The wolves heard I howling about me, And hungry ravens, hoarsely croaking.)<sup>70</sup></p> <p>13. Far better meseemed if my brothers had</p>
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<p>Had the wolves taken my life, Or I had been burnt as a birchen tree.</p> <p>13. From the fell I journeyed five long days and nights, Until the lofty hall of Half I recognized. Seven half-years I with Thora stayed, Hakon's daughter, in Denmark.</p> <p>14. She for my solace wrought in gold Southern halls, and Danish swans.</p> <p>15. We had in pictures the game of warriors, And in handiworks a prince's nobles; Red shields, Hunnish heroes, A sworded host, a helmed host, a prince's following.</p> <p>16. Sigmund's ships from the land sailing, With gilded heads, and carved prows. We on our canvas wrought how Sigar and Siggeir both contended southward in Fyen.</p> <p>17. When Grimhild, the Gothic woman, Heard how greatly I was afflicted, She cast aside her needle-work, and her sons called Oft and earnestly, that she might know, Who for her son would their sister compensate, Or for her consort slain the blood-fine pay?</p> <p>18. Gunnar was ready gold to offer, For the injuries to atone, and Hogni also. She then inquired who would go The steeds to saddle, the chariot to drive, On horseback ride, the hawk let fly, Arrows shoot from the yew bow?</p> <p>19. Valdar and the Danes with Jarizleif, Eymod the third with Jarizkar, Then entered, to princes like. Red mantles had the Langbard's men, Corslets ornamented, towering helmets; Girded they were with falchions, brown were their locks.</p> <p>20. For me each one would choose precious gifts, Precious gifts, and to my heart would speak, If for my many woes they might Gain my confidence, and I would in them trust.</p> <p>21. Grimhild to me brought a potion to drink Cold and bitter, that I my injuries might forget; It was mingled with Urd's power, With cold sea-water, and with Son's blood.</p>	<p>If I my life   could only lose, Or like to birch-wood   burned might be.</p> <p>14. From the mountain forth   five days I fared, Till Hoalf's hall   so high I saw; <sup>12</sup>Seven half-years   with Thora I stayed, Hokon's daughter,   in Denmark then.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>15. With gold she broidered,   to bring me joy, Southern halls   and Danish swans; On the tapestry wove we   warrior's deeds, And the hero's thanes   on our handiwork; (Flashing shields   and fighters armed, Sword-throng, helm-throng,   the host of the king).<sup>14</sup></p> <p>16. Sigmund's<sup>15</sup> ship   by the land was sailing, Golden the figure-head,   gay the beaks; <sup>16</sup>On board we wove   the warriors faring, Sigar and Siggeir,<sup>17</sup>   south to Fjon.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>17. Then Grimhild asked,   the Gothic<sup>19</sup> queen, Whether willingly would I . . . . .<sup>20</sup></p> <p>18. Her needlework cast she   aside, and called Her sons to ask,   with stern resolve, <sup>21</sup>Who amends to their sister   would make for her son, Or the wife requite   for her husband killed.<sup>22</sup></p> <p>19. Ready was Gunnar   gold to give, Amends for my hurt,   and Hogni too; Then would she know   who now would go, The horse to saddle,   the wagon to harness, (The horse to ride,   the hawk to fly, And shafts from bows   of yew to shoot).<sup>23</sup></p> <p>20. (Valdar, king   of the Danes, was come, With Jarizleif, Eymoth,   and Jarizskar).<sup>24</sup> In like princes   came they all, The long-beard men,<sup>25</sup>   with mantles red, Short their mail-coats,   mighty their helmets, <sup>26</sup>Swords at their belts,   and brown their hair.</p> <p>21. Each<sup>27</sup> to give me   gifts was fain, Gifts to give,   and goodly speech, Comfort so   for my sorrows great To bring they tried,   but I trusted them not.</p> <p>22.<sup>28</sup> A draught did Grimhild   give me to drink, Bitter and cold;   I forgot my cares; For mingled therein was magic earth, Ice-cold sea, and the blood of swine.<sup>29</sup></p>	<p>Slain their sister after Sigurth, And had burned me like birchen wood.</p> <p>14. On the fells fared I five days together, Till Hálf's<sup>71</sup> high-built hall I beheld. I sate with Thóra seven half-years, Hákon's daughter, in Danish lands.</p> <p>15. In gold she broidered, to gladden me, Danish swans and Southern halls; Kingly war play the cloths did show, Our handiwork, and hero's thanes; Red shields of war eke, ready henchmen, Helm-clad, sword-girt Hunnish war host;</p> <p>16. Seaward sailing, King Sigmund's ships, With golden dragons and graven stems; In the web we weaved the wars which fought Sigar and Siggeir,<sup>72</sup> south by Funen.<sup>73</sup></p> <p>17. Then heard Grímhild,<sup>74</sup> the Gothic<sup>75</sup> queen, (that soothed I was somewhat in mind).<sup>76</sup> Flung down her web and fetched her sons; To ask gan she most eargerly, If amends to me they meant to make For Sigurth slain and his young son.<sup>77</sup></p> <p>18. Was Gunnar ready gold to offer, Hogni also, to heal my sorrows. Further asked she who to fare was ready,<sup>78</sup> To hitch the horse to the wheeled chariot, [To sit his horse and the hawk let fly, To shoot from yew-bow the shafted arrow].<sup>79</sup></p> <p>19. [Eke Valdar the Dane, with Jarizleif, Eymóth third, and Jarizkar,] In then wended, athelingwise, The folk-warden's thanes;<sup>80</sup> were their frieze coats red, Their byrnies short, their helmets blazoned, Were they girt with swords and swart of hair.</p> <p>20. Would all choose me their choicest gifts, Their choicest gifts, and speak cheer to me That of many sorrows I might in time Win me a truce; but I trusted them not.</p> <p>21. Gave me Grímhild a goblet to drink, Cool and bitter, my cares to forget. Was the mead mixed with the might of the earth,<sup>81</sup> With ice-cold sea, and the sacred boar's blood.</p>
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<p>22. In that horn were characters of every kind Graven and red-hued; nor could I comprehend them: The long lyng-fish<sup>1</sup> of the Haddings' land, An uncut ear of corn: the wild-beasts' entrance.</p> <p>23. In that potion were many ills together, An herb from every wood, and the acorn, The fire-stead's dew,<sup>2</sup> entrails of offerings, Swine's liver seethed; for that deadens strife.</p> <p>24. And then I forgot, when I had taken it, All the king's words in the hall spoken. There to my feet three kings came, Before she herself sought to speak with me.</p> <p>25. "Gudrun! I will give thee gold to possess, Of all the riches much of thy dead father; Rings of red gold, Hlodver's halls, All the hangings left by the fallen king.</p> <p>26. Hunnish maids, those who weave tapestry, And in bright gold work, so that it may delight thee. Over Budli's wealth thou alone shalt rule, Adorned with gold, and given to Atli."</p> <p>27. "I will not have any man, Nor Brynhild's brother marry: It beseems me not with Budli's son To increase a race, or life enjoy."</p> <p>28. "Take care not to pay the chiefs with hate; For 'tis we who have been the aggressors: So shouldst thou act as if yet lived Sigurd and Sigmund, if sons thou bearest."</p> <p>29. "Grimhild! I cannot in mirth indulge, Nor, for my hero's sake, cherish a hope, Since the bloodthirsty [wolf and] raven have together Cruelly drunk my Sigurd's heart's blood."</p> <p>30. "Him<sup>3</sup> of all I have found to be a king of noblest race, And in much most excellent: Him shalt thou have until age lays thee low, Or mateless be, if him thou wilt not take."</p> <p>31. "Cease to offer that cup of ills</p>	<p>23.<sup>30</sup> In the cup were runes of every kind, Written and reddened, I could not read them; A heather-fish<sup>31</sup> from the Haddings' land,<sup>32</sup> An ear uncut, and the entrails of beasts.</p> <p>24. Much evil was brewed within the beer, Blossoms of trees, and acorns burned, Dew of the hearth,<sup>33</sup> and holy entrails, The liver of swine,—all grief to allay.</p> <p>25. Then I forgot,<sup>34</sup> when the draught they gave me, There in the hall, my husband's slaying;<sup>35</sup> On their knees the kings all three<sup>36</sup> did kneel, Ere she herself to speak began:<sup>37</sup></p> <p>26. "Guthrun, gold   to thee I give, The wealth that once   thy father's<sup>38</sup> was, Rings to have,   and Hlothver's<sup>39</sup> halls, And the hangings all   that the monarch had.</p> <p>27. "Hunnish women,   skilled in weaving, Who gold make fair   to give thee joy, And the wealth of Buthli   thine shall be, Gold-decked one,   as Atli's wife."<sup>40</sup></p> <p>Guthrun spake:<sup>41</sup> 28. "A husband now   I will not have, Nor wife of Brynhild's   brother be; It beseems me not   with Buthli's son Happy to be,   and heirs to bear."</p> <p>Grimhild spake: 29. "Seek not on men   to avenge thy sorrows, Though the blame at first   with us hath been; Happy shalt be   as if both still lived, Sigurth and Sigmund,<sup>42</sup>   if sons thou bearest."</p> <p>Guthrun spake: 30. "Grimhild, I may not   gladness find, Nor hold forth hopes   to heroes now, Since once the raven   and ravening wolf<sup>43</sup> Sigurth's heart's-blood   hungrily lapped."<sup>44</sup></p> <p>Grimhild spake: 31. "Noblest of birth   is the ruler now I have found for thee,   and foremost of all; Him shalt thou have   while life thou hast, Or husbandless be   if him thou wilt choose not."</p> <p>Guthrun spake: 32. "Seek not so eagerly   me to send</p>	<p>22. Runestaves full many stood on the horn Stained and graven—I guessed them not: A heath-fish long of the Haddings'<sup>82</sup> land, An uncut ear, the inwards of beasts.</p> <p>23. Were brewed in this beer many baleful things: All worts of the woods, wilted acorns, Soot of the hearth, sacred entrails, A swine's boiled liver, my sorrow to deaden.</p> <p>24. Then altogether forgot I him, My Sigurth, slain by sword in hall:<sup>83</sup> To my knees came then three kings from Hunland,<sup>84</sup> Ere Grímhild herself did say to me:</p> <p>25. "Gold I give thee, Guthrún, to have, The fair folk-lands thy father had, With their hangings eke Hlothvér's<sup>85</sup> castles, And all the wealth the warrior<sup>86</sup> owned;</p> <p>26. "Hunnish maidens, handicraft-skilled In gold to broider, to gladden thee; Alone halt wield the wealth of Buthli, Be with gold endowed, and given to Atli."</p> <p>(Guthrún said:) 27. "Nevermore I wish a mate to have, Nor Brynhild's brother's his bed to share; Not seeming is it with the son of Buthli To beget children and a glad life live."</p> <p>(Grímhild said:) 28. "Harbor no more hateful counsels, Though we have, truly, wrought wicked deeds; Thy lot will be life, as though living still Were Sigurth and Sigmund, if sons thou bear him."</p> <p>(Guthrún said:) 29. "Not may I, Grímhild, in gladness live, Nor hold out hopes to the Hunnish king Since Sigurth's heartblood the hungry wolves And greedy ravens drank together."</p> <p>(Grímhild said:) 30. "Among heroes he is highest of kin, And foremost found where foes are met. His wife shalt be till wanes thy life— Or husbandless live save him thou choolest."</p> <p>(Guthrún said:) 31. "No longer lure me, nor lend thy words</p>
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<p>So pertinaciously, that race to me: He will Gunnar's destruction perpetrate, And will cut out Hogni's heart. I will not cease until the exulting Strife-exciter's life I shall have taken."</p> <p>32. Weeping Grimhild caught the words, By which to her sons Gudrun foreboded evil, And to her kindred dire misfortunes. "Lands I will also give thee, people and followers, Vinbiorg and Valbiorg, if thou wilt accept them; For life possess them, and be happy, daughter!"</p> <p>33. "Him then I will choose among the kings, And from my relatives reluctantly receive him. Never will he be to me a welcome consort, Nor my brothers' bale a protection to our sons."</p> <p>34. Forthwith on horseback was each warrior to be seen; But the Walish women were in chariots placed. For seven days o'er a cold land we rode; But the second seven, we beat the waves; And the third seven, we reached dry land.</p> <p>35. There the gate-wards of the lofty burgh The latticed entrance opened, ere the court we entered.</p> <p>36. Atli waked me, but I seemed to be Full of evil thoughts, for my kinsmen's death.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Atli speaks]</p> <p>37. "So me just now have the Norns waked,— A grateful interpretation I fain would have. Methought that thou, Gudrun! Giuki's daughter! With a treacherous sword didst pierce me through."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Gudrun answers]</p> <p>38. "Fire it forebodes, when one of iron dreams, Arrogance and pleasure, a woman's anger. Against evil I will go burn thee, cure and medicate thee, Although to me thou art hateful."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Atli speaks]</p> <p>39. "Seemed to me here in the garden that young shoots had fallen, / Which I wished to let grow: Torn up with their roots, reddened with blood, To table they were brought, and offered me to eat.</p>	<p>To be a bride   of yon baneful race; On Gunnar first   his wrath shall fall, And the heart will he tear   from Hogni's breast."<sup>45</sup></p> <p>33. Weeping Grimhild   heard the words That fate full sore   for her sons foretold, (And mighty woe   for them should work;)<sup>46</sup> "Lands I give thee,   with all that live there, (Vinbjorg is thine,   and Valbjorg too,)<sup>47</sup> Have them forever,   but hear me, daughter."</p> <p>34. So must I do   as the kings<sup>48</sup> besought, And against my will   for my kinsmen wed, Ne'er with my husband   joy I had, And my sons<sup>49</sup> by my brothers'   fate were saved not.</p> <p>35.<sup>50</sup> I could not rest   till of life I had robbed The warrior<sup>51</sup> bold,   the maker of battles.</p> <p>36.<sup>52</sup> Soon on horseback   each hero was, And the foreign women<sup>53</sup>   in wagons faring; A week through lands   so cold we went, And a second week   the waves we smote, (And a third through lands   that water lacked).<sup>54</sup></p> <p>37. The warders now   on the lofty walls Opened the gates,   and in we rode.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *<sup>55</sup></p> <p>38. Atli woke me,   forever I seemed Of bitterness full   for my brothers' death.</p> <p>Atli spake:<sup>56</sup> 39. "Now from sleep   the Norns have waked me With visions of terror,—   to thee will I tell them; <sup>57</sup>Methought thou, Guthrun,   Gjuki's daughter, With poisoned blade   didst pierce my body."</p> <p>Guthrun spake: 40. "Fire a dream   of steel shall follow And willful pride   one of woman's wrath; A baneful sore   I shall burn from thee, And tend and heal thee,   though hated thou am."<sup>58</sup></p> <p>Atli spake: 41.<sup>59</sup> "Of plants I dreamed,   in the garden drooping, That fain would I have   full high to grow; Plucked by the roots,   and red with blood, They brought them hither,   and bade me eat.</p>	<p>Thus eagerly to that evil kin: On Gunnar will he grimly wreak him, And the heart tear out of Hogni's breast."</p> <p>32. Weeping, Grímhild the word did hear Which boded ill to both her sons, To her offspring an awful fate: "Land I give thee, and liese eke, Thy own forever, to ease thy heart. [Wineburg, Walburg, if thou wilt have them.]"<sup>87</sup></p> <p>33. Then chose I him the chieftains among, By Grímhild driven, against my will; Though hardly can I this husband love, Nor my brothers' slaughter save my children:</p> <p>34. (I shall slay full soon my sons by him—) Thus grimly avenge the Gjúkungs' fall;<sup>88</sup> Nor will I rest ere reft I have The lusty life of the leader-in-war.<sup>89</sup></p> <p>35. Their steeds forthwith bestrode the thanes; Were the Southron women upon wains lifted. For seven days we drove through cold lands, For other seven our oars we plied, For still other seven dry steppes we rode.<sup>90</sup></p> <p>36. The castle wardens, ere we rode in Undid the bars of the doorway's gate,<sup>91</sup></p> <p>37. Atli waked me—but I weened to be Grim in my mind for kinsmen murdered.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Atli said:)</p> <p>38. "Nightly norms me but now awakened—" Was I to make out his evil dream— "Meseemed, Guthrún, Gjúki's daughter, That with stealthy steel thou didst stab me through."<sup>92</sup></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Guthrún said:)</p> <p>39. "A burning odes it, if of blades one dreams; If of woman's wrath, mere willfulness:<sup>93</sup> Burn thee<sup>94</sup> shall I 'gainst bale and woe, And as leech nurse thee, though loth to me."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Atli said:)</p> <p>40. "Meseemed in my garth two saplings fell, Though greatly wished I to let them grow, By the roots uptorn, reddened with blood; Which, borne to my bench, thou didst bid me eat.</p>
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<p>40. "Seemed to me that hawks flew from my hand, Lacking their quarry, to the house of woes; Seemed to me I ate their hearts with honey Swollen with blood, with sorrowing mind.</p> <p>41. "Seemed to me from my hand whelps I let slip; Lacking cause of joy, both of them howled: Seemed to me their bodies became dead carcasses: Of the carrion I was compelled to eat."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Gudrun answers]</p> <p>42. "There will warriors round thy couch converse, And of the white-locked ones take off the head; Death-doomed they are within a few nights, a little ere day: Thy court will eat of them."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[Atli speaks]</p> <p>43. "Lie down I would not, nor sleep after, Obstinate in my fate—That I will execute!"</p>	<p>42. "I dreamed my hawks   from my hand had flown, Eager for food,   to an evil house; I dreamed their hearts   with honey I ate, Soaked in blood,   and heavy my sorrow.</p> <p>43. "Hounds I dreamed   from my hand I loosed, Loud in hunger   and pain they howled; Their flesh methought   was eagles' food, And their bodies now   I needs must eat."</p> <p>Guthrun spake: 44. "Men shall soon   of sacrifice speak, And off the heads   of beasts shall hew Die they shall   ere day has dawned, A few nights hence,   and the folk shall have them."<sup>60</sup></p> <p>Atli spake: 45. "On my bed I sank,   nor slumber sought, Weary with woe,—   full well I remember. · · · · ·<sup>61</sup></p>	<p>41. "Meseemed from my hand two hawks did fly, Famished for food, to the fateful house; Their hearts, meseemed, with honey I ate In sorry mood—were they swol'n with blood.</p> <p>42. "Meseemed from my hand two whelps I loosed; The young yearlings yelped bitterly: Their flesh, meseemed, though foul become, I was made to eat, all unwilling."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Guthrún said:)</p> <p>43. "That means that swains of slaughter speak, And hew off the heads of white-haired cattle: They are fey to fall within few nights' time— Before daybreak—for folks to eat."<sup>95</sup></p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Atli said:)</p> <p>44. "Meseemed I lay, nor to sleep listed, Upon my bed—I will bear it in mind."<sup>96</sup></p>
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<sup>1</sup> That is the long fish of the heath, or Ung, a snake or serpent.

<sup>2</sup> Soot.

<sup>3</sup> Atli: Grimhild speaks.

<sup>4</sup> Thjothrek: the famous Theoderich, king of the Ostrogoths, who became renowned in German story as Dietrich von Bern. The German tradition early accepted the anachronism of bringing together Attila (Etzel, Atli), who died in 453, and Theoderich, who was born about 455, and adding thereto Ermanarich (Jormunrek), king of the Goths, who died about 376. Ermanarich, in German tradition, replaced Theoderich's actual enemy, Odovakar, and it was in battle with Jormunrek (i. e., Odovakar) that Thjothrek is here said to have lost most of his men. The annotator found the material for this note in *Guthrunarkvitha III*, in which Guthrun is accused of having Thjothrek as her lover. At the time when *Guthrunarkvitha II* was composed (early tenth century) it is probable that the story of Theoderich had not reached the North at all, and the annotator is consequently wrong in giving the poem its setting.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the varying accounts of the manner of Sigurth's death cf. *Brot*, concluding prose and note. Grani: cf. *Brot*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> No gap indicated in the manuscript. Some editions combine these two lines with either stanza 5 or stanza 7.

<sup>8</sup> Gotthorm: from this it appears that in both versions of the death of Sigurth the mortally wounded hero killed his murderer, the younger brother of Gunnar and Hogni. The story of how Gotthorm was slain after killing Sigurth in his bed is told in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 22-23, and in the *Volsungasaga*.

<sup>9</sup> On lines 3-4 cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 1. Line 5 is probably spurious.

<sup>10</sup> Many editions make one stanza of stanzas 12 and 13, reconstructing line 3; the manuscript shows no gap. Bugge fills out the stanza as given in brackets.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. note on preceding stanza. Grundtvig suggests as a first line that given in brackets. Many editors reject line 4.

<sup>12</sup> The manuscript marks line 3 as beginning a stanza, and many editions combine lines 3-4 with lines 1-2 of stanza 15.

<sup>13</sup> Hoalf (or Half): Gering thinks this Danish king may be identical with Alf, son of King Hjalprek, and second husband of Hjordis, Sigurth's mother (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla* and note), but the name was a common one. Thora and Hokon have not been identified (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, concluding prose, which is clearly based on this stanza). A Thora appears in *Hynndluljoth*, 18, as the wife of Dag, one of the sons of Halfdan the Old, the most famous of Denmark's mythical kings, and one of her sons is Alf (Hoalf?).

<sup>14</sup> The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza. Some editors combine lines 5-6 with lines 1-2 of stanza 16, while others mark them as interpolated.

<sup>15</sup> Sigmund: Sigurth's father, who here appears as a sea-rover in Guthrun's tapestry.

<sup>16</sup> Some editions combine lines 3-4 with stanza 17.

<sup>17</sup> Sigar: named in *Formaldar sogur II*, 10, as the father of Siggeir, the latter being the husband of Sigmund's twin sister, Signy (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*).

<sup>18</sup> Fjon: this name, referring to the Danish island of Funen, is taken from the *Volsungasaga* paraphrase as better fitting the Danish setting of the stanza than the name in *Regius*, which is "Fife" (Scotland).

<sup>19</sup> Gothic: the term "Goth" was used in the North without much discrimination to apply to all south-Germanic peoples. In *Gripisspo*, 35, Gunnar, Grimhild's son, appears as "lord of the Goths."

<sup>20</sup> No gap is indicated in the manuscript, and most editions combine these two lines either with lines 3-4 of stanza 16, with lines 1-2 of stanza 18, or with the whole of stanza 18. Line 2 has been filled out in various ways. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrase indicates that these two lines are the remains of a full stanza, the prose passage running: "Now Guthrun was somewhat comforted of her sorrows. Then Grimhild learned where Guthrun was now dwelling." The first two lines may be the ones missing.

<sup>21</sup> The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza.

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<sup>22</sup> Grimhild is eager to have amends made to Guthrun for the slaying of Sigurth and their son, Sigmund, because Atli has threatened war if he cannot have Guthrun for his wife.

<sup>23</sup> Lines 5-6 are almost certainly interpolations, made by a scribe with a very vague understanding of the meaning of the stanza, which refers simply to the journey of the Gjukungs to bring their sister home from Denmark.

<sup>24</sup> Lines 1-2 are probably interpolated, though the *Volsungasaga* includes the names. Someone apparently attempted to supply the names of Atli's messengers, the "long-beard men" of line 4, who have come to ask for Guthrun's hand. Some commentators assume, as the *Volsungasaga* does, that these messengers went with the Gjukungs to Denmark in search of Guthrun, but it seems more likely that a transitional stanza has dropped out after stanza 19, and that Guthrun received Atli's emissaries in her brothers' home.

<sup>25</sup> Long-beards: the word may actually mean Langobards or Lombards, but, if it does, it is presumably without any specific significance here. Certainly the names in the interpolated two lines do not fit either Lombards or Huns, for Valdar is identified as a Dane, and Jarizleif and Jarizskar are apparently Slavic.

<sup>26</sup> The manuscript indicates line 5 as beginning a new stanza.

<sup>27</sup> Each: the reference is presumably to Gunnar and Hogni, and perhaps also Grimhild, I suspect that this stanza belongs before stanza 20.

<sup>28</sup> Stanzas 22-25 describe the draught of forgetfulness which Grimhild gives Guthrun, just as she gave one to Sigurth (in one version of the story) to make him forget Brynhild. The draught does not seem to work despite Guthrun's statement in stanza 25 (cf. stanza 30), for which reason Vigfusson, not unwisely, places stanzas 22-25 after stanza 34.

<sup>29</sup> Blood of swine: cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 39 and note.

<sup>30</sup> The *Volsungasaga* quotes stanzas 23-24.

<sup>31</sup> Heather-fish: a snake.

<sup>32</sup> Haddings' land: the world of the dead, so called because, according to Saxo Grammaticus, the Danish king Hadingus once visited it. It is possible that the comma should follow "heather fish," making the "ear uncut" (of grain) come from the world of the dead.

<sup>33</sup> Dew of the hearth: soot.

<sup>34</sup> I forgot: this emendation is doubtful, in view of stanza 30, but cf. note to stanza 22.

<sup>35</sup> In the manuscript, and in some editions, the first line is in the third person plural: "Then they forgot, when the draught they had drunk." The second line in the original is manifestly in bad shape, and has been variously emended.

<sup>36</sup> The kings all three: probably Atli's emissaries, though the interpolated lines of stanza 20 name four of them.

<sup>37</sup> I suspect that line 4 is wrong, and should read: "Ere he himself (Atli) to speak began." Certainly stanzas 26-27 fit Atli much better than they do Grimhild, and there is nothing unreasonable in Atli's having come in person, along with his tributary kings, to seek Guthrun's hand. However, the "three kings" may not be Atli's followers at all, but Gunnar, Hogni, and the unnamed third brother possibly referred to in *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Thy father's: So the manuscript, in which case the reference is obviously to Gjuki. But some editions omit the "thy," and if Atli, and not Grimhild, is speaking (cf. note on stanza 25), the reference may be, as in line 3 of stanza 27, to the wealth of Atli's father, Buthli.

<sup>39</sup> Hlothver: the northern form of the Frankish name Chlodowech (Ludwig), but who this Hlothver was, beyond the fact that he was evidently a Frankish king, is uncertain. If Atli is speaking, he is presumably a Frankish ruler whose land Atli and his Huns have conquered.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. note on stanza 25 as to the probable speaker.

<sup>41</sup> In stanzas 28-32 the dialogue, in alternate stanzas, is clearly between Guthrun and her mother, Grimhild, though the manuscript does not indicate the speakers.

<sup>42</sup> Sigmund: son of Sigurth and Guthrun, killed at Brynhild's behest.

<sup>43</sup> Raven, etc.: the original is somewhat obscure, and the line may refer simply to the "corpse-eating raven."

<sup>44</sup> This stanza presents a strong argument for transposing the description of the draught of forgetfulness (stanzas 22-24 and lines 1-2 of stanza 25) to follow stanza 33.

<sup>45</sup> In the manuscript this stanza is immediately followed by the two lines which here, following Bugge's suggestion, appear as stanza 35. In lines 3-4 Guthrun foretells what will (and actually does) happen if she is forced to become Atli's wife. If stanza 35 really belongs here, it continues the prophesy to the effect that Guthrun will have no rest till she has avenged her brothers' death.

<sup>46</sup> Very likely the remains of two stanzas; the manuscript marks line 4 as beginning a new stanza. On the other hand, lines 3 and 5 may be interpolations.

<sup>47</sup> Vinbjörg and Valbjörg: apparently imaginary place-names.

<sup>48</sup> The kings: presumably Gunnar and Hogni.

<sup>49</sup> My sons: regarding Guthrun's slaying of her two sons by Atli, Erp and Eitil, cf. *Drap Niflunga*, note.

<sup>50</sup> In the manuscript this stanza follows stanza 32. The loss of two lines, to the effect that "Ill was that marriage for my brothers, and ill for Atli himself," and the transposition of the remaining two lines to this point, are indicated in a number of editions.

<sup>51</sup> The warrior, etc.: Atli, whom Guthrun kills.

<sup>52</sup> The stanza describes the journey to Atli's home, and sundry unsuccessful efforts have been made to follow the travellers through Germany and down the Danube.

<sup>53</sup> Foreign women: slaves.

<sup>54</sup> Line 5, which the manuscript marks as beginning a stanza, is probably spurious.

<sup>55</sup> After these two lines there appears to be a considerable gap, the lost stanzas giving Guthrun's story of the slaying of her brothers. It is possible that stanzas 38-45 came originally from another poem, dealing with Atli's dream, and were here substituted for the original conclusion of Guthrun's lament. Many editions combine stanzas 37 and 38, or combine stanza 38 (the manuscript marks line 1 as beginning a stanza) with lines 1-2 of stanza 39.

<sup>56</sup> The manuscript and most editions do not indicate the speakers in this and the following stanzas.

<sup>57</sup> The manuscript indicates line 3 as the beginning of a stanza.

<sup>58</sup> Guthrun, somewhat obscurely, interprets Atli's first dream (stanza 39) to mean that she will cure him of an abscess by cauterizing it. Her interpretation is, of course, intended merely to blind him to her purpose.

<sup>59</sup> In stanzas 41-43 Atli's dreams forecast the death of his two sons, whose flesh Guthrun gives him to eat (cf. *Atlakvitha*, 39, and *Atlamol*, 78).

<sup>60</sup> This stanza is evidently Guthrun's intentionally cryptic interpretation of Atli's dreams, but the meaning of the original is more than doubtful. The word here rendered "sacrifice" may mean "sea-catch," and the one rendered "beasts" may mean "whales." None of the attempted emendations have rendered the stanza really intelligible, but it appears to mean that Atli will soon make a sacrifice of beasts at night, and give their bodies to the people. Guthrun of course has in mind the slaying of his two sons.

<sup>61</sup> With these two lines the poem abruptly ends; some editors assign the speech to Atli (I think rightly), others to Guthrun. Ettmüller combines the lines with stanza 38. Whether stanzas 38-45 originally belonged to Guthrun's lament, or were interpolated here in place of the lost conclusion of that poem from another one dealing with Atli's dreams (cf. note on stanza 37), it is clear that the end has been lost.

<sup>62</sup> Historically, Theodoric, the King of the Ostrogoths, who reigned toward the end of the fifth century. His name corresponds to the MHG. Dietrich.



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<sup>63</sup> According to German tradition, as embodied in the *Nibelungenlied*, he lost them in battle against the Burgundians.

<sup>64</sup> Conjectural. Similar figures are used in *Guðrúnarkviða I*, St.18 and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, St.38.

<sup>65</sup> Added *ad sensum* by the Translator.

<sup>66</sup> See *Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*, St.23.

<sup>67</sup> Literally, “beyond the flood.”

<sup>68</sup> Conjectural.

<sup>69</sup> Because he is her brother.

<sup>70</sup> Supplied, following Bugge’s suggestion, after *Völsunga saga*, Ch.32.

<sup>71</sup> Sigurth’s stepfather (see *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*). Thóra and Hákon probably are figures invented by the poet, since the whole episode is peculiar to this lay.

<sup>72</sup> The names belong to the Siklings, a royal race of Denmark.

<sup>73</sup> The large Danish island.

<sup>74</sup> Guthrún’s mother. See *Grípisspá*, St.33 and note.

<sup>75</sup> Here merely an honorific epithet.

<sup>76</sup> Supplied after Zupitza: the text is defective here.

<sup>77</sup> See *Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*, St.12.

<sup>78</sup> To fetch Guthrún home?

<sup>79</sup> These lines clearly do not belong here. They read as though they originally belonged to *Rígsþula*. In the manuscript there follow the lines [given in brackets], which are evidently also out of their context.

<sup>80</sup> These are Atli’s (Hunnish) emissaries, come to sue for Guthrún’s hand—a plan contrived by Grímhild. At least one stanza seems to be missing in which their journey and Guthrún’s return from Denmark to the court of the Gjúkung was described.

<sup>81</sup> See *Völuspá hin skamma*, St.10.

<sup>82</sup> The Haddings were sea kings. Thus, in the skaldic manner “the Haddings’ land” would be the sea; and “a long heath-fish of the Haddings’ land,” a kenning for an eel; but, punctuated differently, the passage would mean “a serpent and an uncut ear (of grain) of the Haddings’ land,” that is, “seaweed.”

<sup>83</sup> The line is difficult.

<sup>84</sup> Kings tributary to Atli.

<sup>85</sup> See *Völundarkviða*, Introductory Prose.

<sup>86</sup> Sigurth (?).

<sup>87</sup> This line (the poor alliteration exists in the original) is no doubt an interpolation, though already known to the author of the *Völsunga saga* (Ch.32).

<sup>88</sup> Supplied after Heusler’s suggestion.

<sup>89</sup> Atli. The remainder of the stanza transposed here (with Bugge) from its original position after St.31.

<sup>90</sup> The stanza describes the journey of Guthrún (and the Gjúkung?) to the realm of Atli.

<sup>91</sup> Several stanzas must be missing here, dealing with her marriage and the fall of the Gjúkung. The *Völsunga saga* affords no help.

<sup>92</sup> See *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál* for the deeds here prognosticated in Atli’s dreams.

<sup>93</sup> Interpreted *ad sensum*.

<sup>94</sup> Perhaps some cauterization is meant.

<sup>95</sup> See *Atlamál*, St.19. The rendering of the stanza is doubtful; but no doubt there is an intentional ambiguity on the part of Guðrún. In the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.33, Guthrún says, “Not good are these dreams but they will come true; thy sons are likely to be fey.”

<sup>96</sup> As the poem breaks off here, a definite interpretation of the last line is impossible.