

## HELGAÐA HUNDINGSBANA II (The Second Lay of Helgi, Hunding's Bane)

### Bellows' Introduction (1936)

As the general nature of the Helgi tradition has been considered in the introductory note to *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, it is necessary here to discuss only the characteristics of this particular poem. The second *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay is in most respects the exact opposite of the first one: it is in no sense consecutive; it is not a narrative poem, and all or most of it gives evidence of relatively early composition, its origin probably going well back into the tenth century.

It is frankly nothing but a piece of, in the main, very clumsy patchwork, made up of eight distinct fragments, pieced together awkwardly by the annotator with copious prose notes. One of these fragments (stanzas 13-16) is specifically identified as coming from "the old Volsung lay." What was that poem, and how much more of the extant Helgi-lay compilation was taken from it, and did the annotator know more of it than he included in his patchwork? Conclusive answers to these questions have baffled scholarship, and probably always will do so. My own guess is that the annotator knew little or nothing more than he wrote down; having got the first *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay, which was obviously in fairly good shape, out of the way, he proceeded to assemble all the odds and ends of verse about Helgi which he could get hold of, putting them together on the basis of the narrative told in the first Helgi lay and of such stories as his knowledge of prose sagas may have yielded.

Section I (stanzas 1-4) deals with an early adventure of Helgi's, -in which he narrowly escapes capture when he ventures into Hunding's home in disguise. Section II (stanzas 5-12) is a dialogue between Helgi and Sigrun at their first meeting. Section III (stanzas 13-16, the "old Volsung lay" group) is another dialogue between Helgi and Sigrun when she invokes his aid to save her from Hothbrodd. Section IV (stanzas 17-20, which may well be from the same poem as Section III, is made up of speeches by Helgi and Sigrun after the battle in which Hothbrodd is killed; stanza 21, however, is certainly an interpolation from another poem, as it is in a different meter. Section V (stanzas 22-27) is the dispute between Sinfjotli and Gothmund, evidently in an older form than the one included in the first *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay. Section VI (stanzas 28-37) gives Dag's speech to his sister, Sigrun, telling of Helgi's death, her curse on her brother and her lament for her slain husband. Section VII (stanza 38) is the remnant of a dispute between Helgi and Hunding, here inserted absurdly out of place. Section VIII (stanzas 39-50) deals with the return of the dead Helgi and Sigrun's visit to him in the burial hill.

Sijmons maintains that sections I and II are fragments of the Kara lay mentioned by the annotator in his concluding prose note, and that sections IV, VI, and VIII are from a lost Helgi-Sigrun poem, while Section III comes, of course, from the "old Volsung lay." This seems as good a guess as any other, conclusive proof being quite out of the question.

Were it not for sections, VI and VIII the poem would be little more than a battle-ground for scholars, but those two sections are in many ways as fine as anything in Old Norse poetry. Sigrun's curse of her brother for the slaying of Helgi and her lament for her dead husband, and the extraordinary vividness of the final scene in the burial hill, have a quality which fully offsets the baffling confusion of the rest of the poem.

### Hollander's Introduction (1962)

The same theme as in the preceding poem is here treated in a minor key, and doubtless by another poet, with all stress laid on the loves of Helgi and Sigrún.<sup>1</sup> The result is by far more appealing to the modern taste.

It does not seem necessary to assume, with some investigators, that we have here, as in "*The Lay of Helgi Hjorvarðsson*," a number of fragments pieced together by the Collector, or a sort of gleaning of various snatches about Helgi which were not utilized in the preceding poems: with the exception of the first five stanzas,<sup>2</sup> the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> through 28<sup>th</sup>, and the 39<sup>th</sup>, it is essentially one in idea—centering around the Valkyrie's absolute devotion to the hero, a devotion which involved the destruction of her own kin and continued beyond death. If this view is correct—and a study of both style and versification serves but to confirm it—the complete lay must have been one of the glories of Heroic Song.

As it stands, there are lacunæ, awkwardly bridged by the Collector, who with a maladroit hand mars the continuity by inserting a variation of the flying between Sinfjotli and Guthmund, oddly enough after referring to it! There are also a few telling but disconnected stanzas from some poem about Helgi's youth (Sts.1-5).

Even in its present sadly mutilated condition the lay cannot fail to give the impression of simple power. Its diction is noble and restrained, the treatment worthy of the intrinsic interest. Famous throughout the North, in ancient as in modern times, is Sigrún's terrible curse upon her traitor brother and her proud praise of the splendid hero, hinting at defiant love beyond the grave. Nor has time diminished the deep appeal of the passionate lovers' meeting in the barrow—the first appearance in literature of this romantic of so many later ballads.<sup>3</sup>

The casual mention by the Collector that the original title of the poem was "The Old Lay of the Volsungs" may indicate that its composition antedates that of the other two. Nevertheless it seems best to retain the order of the Collection; especially as the death of the lovers makes a fitting conclusion for the cycle.

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
<p>King Sigmund, son of Volsung, had to wife Borghild of Bralund. They named their son Helgi, after Helgi Hiorvard's son. Helgi was fostered by Hagal. There was a powerful king named Hunding, after whom the land was called Hundland. He was a great warrior, and had many sons, who were engaged in warfare. There was enmity, both open and concealed, between King Hunding and King Sigmund, and they slew each other's kinsmen. King Sigmund and his kindred were called Volsungs, and Ylfings. Helgi went forth and secretly explored the court of King Hunding. Heming, Hunding's son, was at home. On departing Helgi met a herdsman, and said:</p> <p>1. "Say thou to Heming, that Helgi bears in mind Who the mailed warrior was, whom the men laid low, When the grey wolf ye had within, And King Hunding thought it was Hamal."</p> <p>Hamal was the son of Hagal. King Hunding sent men to Hagal in search of Helgi, and Helgi had no other way to save himself than by taking the clothes of a female slave and going to grind. They sought but did not find him.</p> <p>Then said Blind the Baleful:</p> <p>2. Sharp are the eyes of Hagal's thrall-wench; Of no churlish race is she who at the mill stands. The millstones are split, the receiver flies asunder. Now a hard fate has befallen the warrior, When a prince must barley grind: Much more fitting to that hand Is the falchion's hilt than a mill-handle.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">OF THE VOLSUNGS<sup>9</sup></p> <p>[P1a]<sup>10</sup> King Sigmund,<sup>11</sup> the son of Volsung, had as wife Borghild, from Bralund.<sup>12</sup> They named their son Helgi, after Helgi Hjorvarthsson;<sup>13</sup> Hagal<sup>14</sup> was Helgi's foster-father. Hunding<sup>15</sup> was the name of a powerful king, and Hundland is named from him. He was a mighty warrior, and had many sons with him on his campaigns. There was enmity and strife between these two, King Hunding and King Sigmund, and each slew the other's kinsmen. King Sigmund and his family were called Volsungs and Ylfings.<sup>16</sup> Helgi went as a spy to the home of King Hunding in disguise. Haeming,<sup>17</sup> a son of King Hunding's, was at home. When Helgi went forth, then he met a young herdsman, and said:</p> <p>1. "Say to Haeming   that Helgi knows Whom the heroes   in armor hid; A gray wolf had they   within their hall, Whom King Hunding<sup>18</sup>   Hamal thought."<sup>19</sup></p> <p>[P1b] Hamal was the name of Hagal's son.<sup>20</sup> King Hunding sent men to Hagal to seek Helgi, and Helgi could not save himself in any other way, so he put on the clothes of a bond-woman and set to work at the mill. They sought Helgi but found him not.</p> <p>2. Then Blind<sup>21</sup> spake out,   the evil-minded: <sup>22</sup>"Of Hagal's bond-woman   bright are the eyes; Yon comes not of churls   who stands at the quern; The millstones break,   the boards are shattered.</p> <p>3. "The hero has   a doom full hard, That barley<sup>23</sup> now   he needs must grind; <sup>24</sup>Better befits   his hand to feel The hilt of the sword   than the millstone's handle."</p>	<p>I. About the Volsungs.</p> <p>King Sigmund, the son of Volsung, had to wife Borghild from Brálund. They named their son Helgi, after Helgi Hjorvarthsson. He was given to Hagal<sup>91</sup> in fosterage. Hunding was hight a mighty king from whom Hundland<sup>92</sup> has its name. He was a great man of war and had many sons who were out on forays. There was hatred and feud between King Hunding and King Sigmund, and they slew one another's kinsmen. King Sigmund and his kin were hight Volsungs<sup>93</sup> and Ylfings. Helgi went as a spy in disguise to the hall of King Hunding. Heming, one of the sons of King Hunding, was at home. <i>Now when Helgi was about to leave, he met a shepherd boy and he said:</i></p> <p>1. "Say to Heming that Helgi recalleth Whom in byrnie the heroes felled.<sup>94</sup> In the hall had ye the grey heath-dweller<sup>95</sup> Whom King Hunding thought Hamal to be."</p> <p>Hamal was the name of Hagal's son. King Hunding sent men to Hagal to seek Helgi, and Helgi could not save himself but by putting on the clothes of a bondmaid and turning the millstone. They searched but found Helgi nowhere.</p> <p>2. <sup>96</sup>“(Then Blind<sup>97</sup> said thus, ay bent on ill): “Bright are the eyes of Hagal's bondmaid; No cotter's quean at the quern who standeth: The bin breaketh, burst the millstones.<sup>98</sup></p> <p>3. “A harsh fate hath the hero fettered, Since the bold one now must barley grind; The hilt rather of hero's sword, Than the mill-handle, that hand befitteth.”</p>

<p>Hagal answered and said:--</p> <p>3. No wonder 'tis that the receiver rattles, When a royal damsel the handle turns. She hovered higher than the clouds, and, Like the vikings, dared to fight, Until Helgi made her captive. She is a sister of Sigar and Hogni; Therefore has fierce eyes the Ylfing maid.</p> <p>Helgi escaped and went on board a ship of war. He slew King Hunding, and was afterwards named Helgi Hundingsbani.</p> <p>He lay with his force in Brunavagar, and carried on "strand-hogg"<sup>4</sup> and ate raw flesh. There was a king named Hogni, whose daughter was Sigrun: she was a Valkyria, and rode through the air and over the sea. She was Svava regenerated. Sigrun rode to Helgi, and said:--</p> <p>4. What men cause a ship along the coasts to float? Where do ye warriors a home possess? What await ye in Brunavagar? Whither desire ye to explore a way?</p> <p>Helgi</p> <p>5. Hamal causes a ship along the coasts to float; We have home in Hlesey; A fair wind we await in Brunavagar; Eastward we desire to explore a way.</p> <p>Sigrun</p> <p>6. Where, O prince! hast thou wakened war, Or fed the birds of conflict's sisters?<sup>5</sup> Why is thy corslet sprinkled with blood? Why beneath the helm eat ye raw flesh?</p> <p>Helgi</p> <p>7. It was the Ylfings' son's last achievement,— If thou desirest to know—west of the ocean, That I took bears in Bragalund, And the eagles' race with our weapons sated. Now, maiden! I have said what the reasons were, Why at sea we little cooked meat ate.</p>	<p>Hagal answered and said:</p> <p>4. "Small is the wonder   if boards are splintered, By a monarch's daughter   the mill is turned; Once through clouds   she was wont to ride, And battles fought   like fighting men, (Till Helgi a captive   held her fast; Sister she is   of Sigar and Hogni,<sup>25</sup> Thus bright are the eyes   of the Ylfings' maid.)"<sup>26</sup></p> <p>[P1c] Helgi escaped and went to a fighting ship. He slew King Hunding, and thenceforth was called Helgi Hundingsbane.</p> <p>(II)<sup>27</sup></p> <p>[P2] He lay with his host in Brunavagar,<sup>28</sup> and they had there a strand-slaughtering,<sup>29</sup> and ate the flesh raw. Hogni was the name of a king. His daughter was Sigrun;<sup>30</sup> she was a Valkyrie and rode air and water; she was Svava reborn. Sigrun rode to Helgi's ship and said:</p> <p>5. "Who rules the ship   by the shore so steep? Where is the home   ye warriors have? Why do ye bide   in Brunavagar, Or what the way   that ye wish to try?"</p> <p>Helgi spake:<sup>31</sup></p> <p>6 "Hamal's<sup>32</sup> the ship   by the shore so steep, Our home in Hlesey<sup>33</sup>   do we have; For fair wind bide we   in Brunavagar, Eastward the way   that we wish to try."</p> <p>Sigrun spake:</p> <p>7. "Where hast thou, warrior,   battle wakened, Or gorged the birds   of the sisters of Guth?<sup>34</sup> Why is thy byrnie   spattered with blood, Why helmed dost feast   on food uncooked?"</p> <p>Helgi spake:</p> <p>8. "Latest of all,   the Ylfings' son On the western sea,   if know thou wilt, Captured bears   in Bragalund,<sup>35</sup> And fed the eagles   with edge of sword. <sup>36</sup>Now is it shown   why our shirts are bloody, And little our food   with fire is cooked."</p>	<p><i>Hagal answered and said:</i></p> <p>4. "Little wonder that, though throbs the bin, Since queenly maiden the mill-handle turns: She was wont to ride the welkin above, And vikingwise wielded the sword;<sup>99</sup></p> <p>5. "Ere that Helgi her led home as thrall, (And the mighty maiden at the mill did drudge;)<sup>100</sup> A sister she of Sigar and Hogni, Hence awful the eyes of the Ylfing maid."</p> <p>Helgi escaped from there and went on a warship. He slew King Hunding and was thereafter called the Hunding-Slayer.</p> <p>II.</p> <p>One time he lay with his fleet in Bruna Bay and made a cattle raid on lean, and his men ate the meat raw.<sup>101</sup> Hogni was the name of a king whose daughter was Sigrún. She became a Valkyrie and rode through the air and over the sea. She was Sváva born again. <i>She rode to Helgi's ships and said:</i></p> <p>6. "To the steep shore who steereth the fleet? Where, ye heroes lies your homestead? For what bide ye in Bruna Bay? Whither list ye now to lay your course?"</p> <p><i>(Helgi said:)</i></p> <p>7. "'Tis Hamal steers to steep shore the fleet, The warriors' homestead on Hlés Isle<sup>102</sup> lies; A good breeze bide we in Bruna Bay, And east list we to lay our course."</p> <p><i>(The Valkyrie said:)</i></p> <p>8. "Where hast, hero, hoisted war shield,<sup>103</sup> Or fed Gunn's fowls,<sup>104</sup> with fallen men? Why is thy byrnie with blood besprent, Why, clad in armor, eat ye raw meat?"</p> <p><i>(Helgi said:)</i></p> <p>9. "This, last of all did the Ylfing's son West of the sea, if to wit thee list, That bears<sup>105</sup> we bound in Braga Grove, And with sword staed the sib of eagles: Said have I now why my sark is red; And by strand why little we steak our meat."<sup>106</sup></p>
--	--	--

<p>Sigrun 8. To a battle thou alludest. Before Helgi has King Hunding been doomed to fall. In conflict ye have engaged, when your kindred ye avenged, / And stained with blood the falchion's edge.</p> <p>Helgi 9. Why dost thou suppose, sagacious maiden! That it was they, who their kin avenged? Many a warrior's bold sons there are, And hostile to our kindred.</p> <p>Sigrun 10. I was not far, leader of people! Eager, at many a chieftain's end: Yet crafty I account Sigmund's son, when in val-runes<sup>6</sup> The slaughter he announces.</p> <p>11. A while ago I saw thee commanding the warships, When thou hadst station on the bloody prow, And the cold sea waves were playing. Now, prince! thou wilt from me conceal it, But Hogni's daughter recognizes thee.</p> <p>Granmar was the name of a powerful prince who dwelt at Svarinshaug. He had many sons: one was called Hodbrodd, the second Gudmund, the third Starkadr. Hodbrodd was at the assembly of kings, and there betrothed himself to Sigrun, the daughter of Hogni. But when she was informed of it, she rode with the Valkyriur through the air and over the sea in quest of Helgi. Helgi was at that time at Logafjoll, warring against the sons of Hunding, where he slew Alf and Eyiolf, Hiorvard and Hervard. Being over-fatigued with the conflict, he was sitting under the Arastein, where Sigrun found him, and running to him, threw her arms around his neck, and, kissing him, told him her errand so as it is related in the first <i>Volsungakvida</i>.</p> <p>12. Sigrun sought the joyous prince, Helgi's hand she forthwith grasped, Kissed and addressed the helm-decked king.</p> <p>13. Then was the chieftain's mind to the lady turned. She declared that she had loved, With her whole heart, Sigmund's son, before she had seen him.</p> <p>14. "To Hodbrodd I was in th' assembly betrothed, But I another prince would have: Yet, chieftain! I foresee my kindred's wrath:</p>	<p>Sigrun spake: 9. "Of battle thou tellest,   and there was bent Hunding the king   before Helgi down; There was carnage when thou   didst avenge thy kin, And blood flowed fast   on the blade of the sword."</p> <p>Helgi spake: 10. "How didst thou know   that now our kin, Maiden wise,   we have well avenged? Many there are   of the sons of the mighty Who share alike   our lofty race."<sup>37</sup></p> <p>Sigrun spake: 11. "Not far was I   from the lord of the folk, Yester morn,   when the monarch was slain; Though crafty the son   of Sigmund, methinks, When he speaks of the fight   in slaughter-runes."<sup>38</sup></p> <p>12. "On the long-ship once   I saw thee well, When in the blood-stained   bow thou wast, (And round thee icy   waves were raging;) Now would the hero   hide from me, But to Hogni's daughter   is Helgi known."<sup>39</sup></p> <p>(III)<sup>40</sup></p> <p>[P3] Granmar was the name of a mighty king, who dwelt at Svarin's hill. He had many sons; one was named Hothbrodd, another Gothmund, a third Starkath. Hothbrodd was in a kings' meeting, and he won the promise of having Sigrun, Hogni's daughter, for his wife. But when she heard this, she rode with the Valkyries over air and sea to seek Helgi. Helgi was then at Logafjoll, and had fought with Hunding's sons; there he killed Alf and Eyolf, Hjorvarth and Hervarth. He was all weary with battle, and sat under the eagle-stone. There Sigrun found him, and ran to throw her arms about his neck, and kissed him, and told him her tidings, as is set forth in the old Volsung lay:</p> <p>13. Sigrun the joyful   chieftain sought, Forthwith Helgi's   hand she took; She greeted the hero   helmed and kissed him, The warrior's heart   to the woman turned.<sup>41</sup></p> <p>14.<sup>42</sup> From her heart the daughter   of Hogni spake, Dear was Helgi,   she said, to her; "Long with all   my heart I loved Sigmund's son   ere ever I saw him.</p> <p>15. "At the meeting to Hothbrodd   mated I was, But another hero   I fain would have;</p>	<p>(<i>The Valkyrie said:</i>) 10. "Of the fight tell'st thou when fell in battle, By Helgi's hand, Hunding the king; Clashed ye in combat thy kinsman to avenge: Streamed the blood then o'er the brand's edges."</p> <p>(<i>Helgi said:</i>) 11. "How wist thou, woman, that we the men Who in combat clashing their kinsman avenged? No lack is there of lordly kings' sons In all like to our kindred."</p> <p>(<i>The Valkyrie said:</i>) 12. "Not far was I, young folk-warder, When yestermorn the mighty king fell; But Sigmund's son most sly I ween To hint of that battle with hidden runes."<sup>107</sup></p> <p>"I watched thee eke on warship standing, On bloody bow, breasting the waves— They coolly played the keels about. Now strives the hero to hide him from me, But to Hogni's daughter is Helgi known."</p> <p>III.</p> <p>Granmar was the name of a mighty king who dwelled at Svarin's Hill. He had many sons. One was hight Hothbrodd, another, Guthmund, and a third, Starkath. At a meeting of kings, Hothbrodd plighted himself to Sigrún, the daughter of King Hogni.<sup>108</sup> But when she heard of that she rode through the air and over the sea with (her) Valkyries to seek Helgi. He was then at the Loga Fells and had fought against the sons of Hunding, and there he had felled Alf and Eyolf, Hjorvarth and Hervarth, and was now all wearied with battle, and was seated beneath the Eagle Rock. There Sigrún found him, and flung her arms about his neck and kissed him and told him the tidings, as is told in "The Old Lay of the Volsungs."</p> <p>14. Sought then Sigrún the gladsome sea king, And hastened Helgi's his hand to grasp, Helmeted king with kiss greeted; To the maiden turned then his mind the lord.</p> <p>15.<sup>109</sup> Nor hid her heart's wish Hogni's daughter; Said that Helgi's love she would have, That dear had been, and dwelled in her heart, The son of Sigmund ere seen by her.</p> <p>16. "Was I given to Hothbrodd before gathered host, But for other hero my heart did long;</p>
---	--	---

<p>I have my father's promise broken."</p> <p>15. Hogni's daughter spoke not at variance with her heart: she said that Helgi's affection she must possess.</p> <p>Helgi 16. Care thou not for Hogni's wrath, Nor for the evil mind of thy kin. Thou shalt, young maiden! live with me: Of a good race thou art, as I perceive.</p> <p>Helgi then collected a large fleet and proceeded to Frekastein, and at sea experienced a perilous storm. Lightnings came over them, and the flashes entered the ships. They saw that nine Valkyriur were riding in the air, and recognized Sigrun among them. The storm then abated and they reached land in safety. The sons of Granmar were sitting on a hill as the ships were sailing towards the land. Gudmund leapt on a horse, and rode to explore on the hill by the haven. The Volsungs then lowered their sails, and Gudmund spoke as is before written in the <i>Helgakvida</i>:-</p> <p>"Who is the leader that commands the fleet, And an appalling host leads to our land?"</p> <p>This said Gudmund, Granmar's son:</p> <p>17. Who is the warrior that commands the ships, And lets his golden banner wave o'er his prow? No peace seems to me in that ship's front; It casts a warlike glow around the vikings.</p> <p>Sinfjotli, Sigmund's son, answered:</p> <p>18. Here may Hodbrodd Helgi learn to know, The hard of flight, in the fleet's midst: He the possession holds of thy race; He the fishes' heritage has to him subjected.</p> <p>Gudmund 19. Therefore ought we first, at Frekastein, To settle together, and decide our quarrels! Hodbrodd! 'tis time vengeance to take, If an inferior lot we long have borne.</p> <p>Sinfjotli 20. Rather shalt thou, Gudmund! tend goats, And steep mountain-tops shalt climb, Have in thy hand a hazel staff, That will better please thee than judgments of the sword.</p>	<p>Though, king, the wrath   of my kin I fear, Since I broke my father's   fairest wish."</p> <p>Helgi spake: 16. "Fear not ever   Hogni's anger, Nor yet thy kinsmen's   cruel wrath; Maiden, thou   with me shalt live, Thy kindred, fair one,   I shall not fear."</p> <p>(IV)<sup>43</sup></p> <p>[P4a] Helgi then assembled a great sea-host and went to Frekastein.<sup>44</sup> On the sea he met a perilous storm; lightning flashed overhead and the bolts struck the ship. They saw in the air that nine Valkyries were riding, and recognized Sigrun among them. Then the storm abated, and they came safe and sound to land. Granmar's sons sat on a certain mountain as the ships sailed toward the land. Gothmund leaped on a horse and rode for news to a promontory near the harbor; the Volsungs were even then lowering their sails. Then Gothmund said, as is written<sup>45</sup> before in the Helgi lay:</p> <p>"Who is the king   who captains the fleet, And to the land   the warriors leads?"</p> <p>Sinfjotli,<sup>46</sup> Sigmund's son, answered him, and that too is written.</p>	<p>Though fear I, king, my kinsmen's wrath, For thwarted have I the thanes' dearest wish."</p> <p>(<i>Helgi said:</i>) 17. "Reck thou shalt not of Hognir's wrath, Nor of the ill will of all they kin; With me shalt now, young maiden, live; Nor dread I, dear one, thy doughty brothers."</p> <p>IV.</p> <p><sup>110</sup>Helgi drew together a great fleet and sailed to Freka Stone. At sea a fearful storm arose. Flashes of lightning shone about them and struck the ships. They saw nine Valkyries ride aloft and knew again Sigrún. Then the storm fell and they made land unharmed. The sons of Granmar where seated on a cliff when the ships neared land. Guthmund leaped on his horse and rode to a hill by the harbor to find out whose fleet it was. The Volsungs were then lowering their sails. <i>Then said Guthmund, as is written above in "The Lay of Helgi".</i><sup>111</sup></p> <p>"Who the highborn hero, leading These hosts hither to harry on us?"</p> <p>Sinfjotli, the son of Sigmund, made answer to him, and that also is written there.</p>
--	--	--

<p>Gudmund rode home with intelligence of the hostile armament; whereupon the sons of Granmar collected a host, and many kings came thither. Among them were Hogni, the father of Sigrun, with his sons, Bragi and Dag. There was a great battle, and all the sons of Hogni, and all their chiefs were slain, except Dag, who obtained peace, and swore oaths to the Volsungs. Sigrun, going among the slain, found Hothbrodd at the point of death. She said:</p> <p>23. Not will Sigrun of Sefafioll, King Hothbrodd! sink in thy arms: Thy life is departed. Oft the axe's blade The head approaches of Granmar's sons.</p> <p>She then met Helgi, and was overjoyed. He said:</p> <p>24. Not to thee, all-wise maiden! are all things granted, Though, I say, in somewhat are the Norns to blame. This morn have fallen at Frekastein Bragi and Hogni: I was their slayer.</p> <p>25. But at Styrkleifar King Starkadr, And at Hlebiorg the son of Hrollaug. That prince I saw of all most fierce, Whose trunk yet fought when the head was far.</p> <p>26. On the earth lie the greater number Of thy kinsmen, to corpses turned. Thou hast not fought the battle, yet 'twas decreed, That thou, potent maiden! shouldst cause the strife.</p> <p>Sigrun then wept. Helgi said:</p> <p>27. Sigrun! console thyself; a Hild thou hast been to us. Kings cannot conquer fate: Gladly would I have them living who are departed, If I might clasp thee to my breast.</p>	<p>[P4b] Gothmund rode home with his tidings of the host; then Granmar's sons summoned an army. Many kings came there; there were Hogni, Sigrun's father, and his sons Bragi and Dag. There was a great battle, and all Granmar's sons were slain and all their allies; only Dag, Hogni's son, was spared, and he swore loyalty<sup>47</sup> to the Volsungs. Sigrun went among the dead and found Hothbrodd at the coming of death. She said:</p> <p>17. "Never shall Sigrun   from Sevafjoll,<sup>48</sup> Hothbrodd king,   be held in thine arms; Granmar's sons   full cold have grown, And the giant-steeds<sup>49</sup> gray   on corpses gorge."</p> <p>Then she sought out Helgi, and was full of joy. He said:</p> <p>18. "Maid,<sup>50</sup> not fair   is all thy fortune, The Norns<sup>51</sup> I blame   that this should be; This morn there fell   at Frekastein Bragi<sup>52</sup> and Hogni   beneath my hand.</p> <p>19.<sup>53</sup> "At Hlebjorg fell   the sons of Hrollaug, Starkath<sup>54</sup> the king   at Styrkleifar; Fighters more noble   saw I never, The body fought   when the head had fallen.</p> <p>20. "On the ground full low   the slain are lying, Most are there   of the men of thy race; Nought hast thou won,   for thy fate it was Brave men to bring   to the battle-field."</p> <p>Then Sigrun wept.   Helgi said:</p> <p>21.<sup>55</sup> "Grieve not, Sigrun,   the battle is gained, The fighter can shun not his fate." Sigrun spake: "To life would I call   them who slaughtered lie, If safe on thy breast I might be."</p> <p>(V)<sup>56</sup></p> <p>This Gothmund the son of Granmar spoke:</p> <p>22. "What hero great   is guiding the ships? A golden flag<sup>57</sup>   on the stem he flies; I find not peace in   the van of your faring, And round the fighters   is battle-light<sup>58</sup> red."</p> <p>Sinfjotli spake: 23. "Here may Hothbrodd   Helgi find, The hater of flight,   in the midst of the fleet; The home of all   thy race he has,</p>	<p>Guthmund rode home with these tidings of war. Then gathered the sons of Granmar an army. Many kings came there, and among them Hogni, Sigrún's father, and his sons Bragi and Dag. A great battle followed, and there fell all the sons of Granmar, and all their leaders but only Dag, the son of Hogni. He was given quarter and swore oaths to the Volsungs. Sigrún went upon the battlefield and found Hothbrodd nigh unto death. <i>She said:</i></p> <p>18. "Wilt not Sigrún of the Seva Fells, Highborn Hothbrodd, e'er hold in they arms; Have lost their lives—men's limbs tear now Grey-coated wolves—all of Granmar's sons."</p> <p>Then found she Helgi and was most glad. <i>He said:</i></p> <p>19. "Not good only was given thee, Sigrún, Ill norms, though, in this had a share: Fell this morning at Freka Stone Bragi and Hogni—my brand slew them;</p> <p>20. "And at the Hlé Fells, Hrollaug's sons, And at the Styr Cliffs, Starkath the king: Of goodly warriors I grimmest ween him— His body battled albeit headless."<sup>112</sup></p> <p>21. "On the field have fallen by far the most, Slain by the sword, of Sigrún's kinsmen; In war hast won great woe only, Since strife didst stir 'mong sturdy lords."</p> <p>Then wept Sigrún. <i>He said:</i></p> <p>22. "Take heart, Sigrún, a Hild<sup>113</sup> though thou'st been to us: / Avails not fight against fate." <i>(Sigrún said:)</i> "Alive I could wish who are lying dead, And eke in my arms could fold thee."</p> <p>V.</p> <p><i>Thus spoke Guthmund, the son of Granmar:</i></p> <p>23. "What king is it these keels who steereth? His golden banner at the bow floateth, His proud prows seem no peace to betoken, A blood-red glow forebodeth war."<sup>114</sup></p> <p><i>(Sinfjotli said:)</i> 24. "Here mayst, Hothbrodd, find Helgi now In the midst of his fleet, the fearless hero; The Fjorsung's lands fighting he won him,</p>
--	---	--

<p>Helgi obtained Sigrun, and they had sons. Helgi lived not to be old. Dag, the son of Hogni, sacrificed to Odin, for vengeance for his father. Odin lent Dag his spear. Dag met with his relation Helgi in a place called Fjoturlund, and pierced him through with his spear. Helgi fell there, but Dag rode to the mountains and told Sigrun what had taken place.</p> <p>28. Loath am I, sister! sad news to tell thee; For unwillingly I have my sister caused to weep. This morning fell, in Fjoturlund, The prince who was on earth the best, And on the necks of warriors stood.</p> <p>Sigrun 29. Thee shall the oaths all gnaw, Which to Helgi thou didst swear, At the limpid Leiptr's water, And at the cold dank wave-washed rock.</p> <p>30. May the ship not move forward, which under thee should move, / Although the wished-for wind behind thee blow. / May the horse not run, which under thee should run, / Although from enemies thou hast to flee!</p>	<p>And over the realm   of the fishes he rules."<sup>59</sup></p> <p>Gothmund spake: 24. "First shall swords   at Frekastein<sup>60</sup> Prove our worth   in place of words; Time is it, Hothbrodd,   vengeance to have,<sup>61</sup> If in battle worsted   once we were."</p> <p>Sinfjotli spake: 25. "Better, Gothmund,   to tend the goats, And climb the rocks   of the mountain cliffs; A hazel switch   to hold in thy hand More seemly were   than the hilt of a sword."</p> <p>Helgi spake: 26.<sup>62</sup> "Better, Sinfjotli,   thee 'twould beseem Battles to give,   and eagles to gladden, Than vain and empty   speech to utter, Though warriors oft   with words do strive.</p> <p>27. "Good I find not   the sons of Granmar, But for heroes 'tis seemly   the truth to speak; At Moinsheimar   proved the men That hearts for the wielding   of swords they had, (And ever brave   the warriors are.)"</p> <p>(VI)<sup>63</sup></p> <p>[P6a] Helgi took Sigrun to wife, and they had sons. Helgi did not reach old age. Dag, the son of Hogni, offered sacrifice to Othin to be avenged for his father's death; Othin gave Dag his spear. Dag found Helgi, his brother-in-law, at a place which is called Fjoturlund.<sup>64</sup> He thrust the spear through Helgi's body. Then Helgi fell, and Dag rode to Sevafjoll and told Sigrun the tidings:</p> <p>28. "Sad am I, sister,   sorrow to tell thee, Woe to my kin   unwilling I worked; In the morn there fell   at Fjoturlund The noblest prince   the world has known, (And his heel he set   on the heroes' necks.)"<sup>65</sup></p> <p>Sigrun spake: 29. "Now may every   oath thee bite That with Helgi   sworn thou hast, By the water   bright of Leipt,<sup>66</sup> And the ice-cold   stone of Uth.<sup>67</sup></p> <p>30. "The ship shall sail not   in which thou sailest, Though a favoring wind   shall follow after; The horse shall run not   whereon thou ridest, Though fain thou art   thy foe to flee.</p>	<p>All the gold eke which owned they kin."<sup>115</sup></p> <p>(Guthmund said:) 25. "Rather shall, foeman, at Freka Stone Our slaughterous swords settle between us; 'Tis time, Hothbrodd, to take revenge, Since by them oft overborne we were."</p> <p>(Sinfjotli said:) 26. "Rather shalt, Guthmund, the goat flocks herd, In clefts of cliffs clambering about, And hold in thy hand a hazel rod: That's better for thee than battling with swords."</p> <p>(Helgi said:) 27.<sup>116</sup> "'Twere, Sinfjotli, more seeming far To wield thy sword and sate eagles, Than with words to wage war between you, Though the ring-breakers' wrath is kindled.</p> <p>28. "No good I wait me from Granmar's sons, Yet befits it kings no falsehood to say; At Móinsheim right manfully Their wands-of-wounds they wielded boldly."</p> <p>VI.</p> <p>Helgi wedded Sigrún and had sons by her. Helgi lived no long. Dag, Hogni's son, sacrificed to Óthin that he should help him avenge his father, and Óthin lent Dag his spear.<sup>117</sup> Dag found Helgi, his sister's husband, in a grove which is hight Fjotur Grove.<sup>118</sup> He ran Helgi through with his spear. Helgi died. <i>Dag rode to the Seva Fells and told Sigrún the tidings:</i></p> <p>29. "Loath am I, sister, to tell sad tidings; For unwilling was I to work thee harm."<sup>119</sup> Fell this morning by Fjotur Grove Under heaven who was of all heroes best, And set his foot on sea kings' necks."</p> <p>Sigrún said: 30. "Shall every one of the oaths strike thee Which to Sigmund's son thou swarest of yore By light-hued leaping Leiptr's<sup>120</sup> water, And eke by Unn's<sup>121</sup> ice-cold altar.</p> <p>31. "The boat shall budge not which beareth thee, A fair wind though doth fill its sails; The steed shall run not thou ridest on, Though fain thy foeman flee thou wouldest!</p>
---	---	--

<p>31. May the sword not bite which thou drawest, Unless it sing round thy own head. Then would Helgi's death be on thee avenged, If a wolf thou wert, out in the woods, Of all good bereft, and every joy, have no sustenance, Unless on corpses thou shouldst spring.</p> <p>Dag 32. Sister! thou ravest, and hast lost thy wits, When on thy brother thou callest down such miseries. Odin alone is cause of all the evil; For between relatives he brought the runes of strife.</p> <p>33. Thy brother offers thee rings of red gold, All Vandilsve and Vigdalir: Have half the land, thy grief to compensate, Woman ring-adorned! thou and thy sons.</p> <p>Sigrun 34. So happy I shall not sit at Sefafjoll, Neither at morn nor night, as to feel joy in life, If o'er the people plays not the prince's beam of light; If his war-steed runs not under the chieftain hither, To the gold bit accustomed; if in the king I cannot rejoice.</p> <p>35. So had Helgi struck with fear All his foes and their kindred, As before the wolf the goats run frantic From the fell, of terror full.</p> <p>36. So himself Helgi among warriors bore, As the towering ash is among thorns, Or as the fawn, moistened with dew, That more proudly stalks than all the other beasts, And its horns glisten against the sky.</p> <p>A mound was raised for Helgi; but when he came to Valhall, Odin offered him the rule over all jointly with himself. Helgi said:</p> <p>37. Thou, Hunding! shalt for every man A foot-bath get, and fire kindle; Shalt bind the dogs, to the horses look, To the swine give wash, ere to sleep thou goest.</p>	<p>31. "The sword shall bite not   which thou bearest, Till thy head itself   it sings about. [The shield shall not help thee which thou holdest.]<sup>68</sup></p> <p>32. "Vengeance were mine   for Helgi's murder, Wert thou a wolf   in the woods without, Possessing nought   and knowing no joy, Having no food   save corpses to feed on."</p> <p>Dag spake: 33. "Mad art thou, sister,   and wild of mind, Such a curse   on thy brother to cast; Othin is ruler   of every ill, Who sunders kin   with runes of spite.</p> <p>34. "Thy brother rings   so red will give thee, All Vandilsve   and Vigdalir;<sup>69</sup> Take half my land   to pay the harm, Ring-decked maid,   and as meed for thy sons."</p> <p>Sigrun spake: 35. "I shall sit not happy   at Sevafjoll, Early or late,   my life to love, If the light cannot show,   in the leader's band, Vigblaer<sup>70</sup> bearing him   back to his home, (The golden-bitted;   I shall greet him never.)<sup>71</sup></p> <p>36. "Such the fear   that Helgi's foes Ever felt,   and all their kin, As makes the goats   with terror mad Run from the wolf   among the rocks.</p> <p>37. "Helgi rose   above heroes all Like the lofty ash   above lowly thorns, Or the noble stag,   with dew besprinkled, Bearing his head   above all beasts, (And his horns gleam bright   to heaven itself.)<sup>72</sup></p> <p>[P6b] A hill was made in Helgi's memory. And when he came to Valhall, then Othin bade him rule over everything with himself.<sup>73</sup></p> <p>(VII)</p> <p>Helgi said: 38. "Thou shalt, Hunding,   of every hero Wash the feet,   and kindle the fire, Tie up dogs,   and tend the horses, And feed the swine   ere to sleep thou goest."<sup>74</sup></p>	<p>32. "The sword shall bit not which is bared by thee, But it sing o'er thyself and smite thee down, (Nor shield shelter but be shattered quickly,)<sup>122</sup> (Though sore needed when set upon).<sup>123</sup></p> <p>33. "Then had I vengeance for Helgi's death, If a wolf thou wert in the wilderness, Wretchedly roving, and ravenous, And feed to bursting on foul carrion."</p> <p><i>Dag said:</i> 34. "Bereft of reason and raving art thou, To wish thy brother, such baleful fate: Of all evil is Óthin father: He strife did stir among stanch kinsmen."<sup>124</sup></p> <p>35. "Weregild I give thee—red-golden rings, Vandil's hallowed stead, and Vig-Dales also, Half our homeland—for the harm done thee, Sigrún, sister, and to thy sons."</p> <p><i>(Sigrún said:)</i> 36. "Shall I sadly sit at Seva Sells, Nor late nor early in life be glad But on lord and liegemen fall light again,<sup>125</sup> And on Vigblær's back he is borne hither, On gold-bitted steed: would I greet him fondly.</p> <p>37. "Were filled with fear his foemen all, Their kinsmen eke, cowed by Helgi, As from the wolf will wildly run Fell-grazing goats aghast with dread.</p> <p>38. "High among heroes did Helgi stand, Like shapely ash tree 'mong shrubs and thorns; Or as dew-dripping<sup>126</sup> deer doth tower Above all other beasts of the woodlands: Glow his horns on high to very heaven."</p> <p>A mound was thrown up over Helgi. But when he came to Valholl, Óthin let him have sway over all things together with himself.</p> <p><i>Helgi said:</i> 39. "Thou shalt, Hunding, hearth fires kindle, And wash the feet of every wight; Shalt herd horses and the hounds tether, Give the swine their swill ere to sleep thou goest."<sup>127</sup></p>
--	--	--



<p>A female slave passing at evening by Helgi's mound, saw him riding towards it with many men:</p> <p>38. Is it a delusion which methinks I see, Or the powers' dissolution, that ye, dead men, ride, And your horses with spurs urge on, Or to warriors is a home journey granted?</p> <p>Helgi 39. 'Tis no delusion which thou thinkst to see, Nor of mankind the end, although thou seest us, Although our horses we with spurs urge on, Nor to warriors is a home-journey granted.</p> <p>The slave went home and said to Sigrun:</p> <p>40. Sigrun! go forth from Sefafioll, If the people's chief thou desirest to meet. The mound is opened, Helgi is come, His wounds still bleed; the prince prayed thee That thou wouldst still the trickling blood.</p> <p>Sigrun entered the mound to Helgi and said:</p> <p>41. Now am I as glad, at our meeting, As the voracious hawks of Odin, When they of slaughter know; of warm prey, Or, dewy-feathered, see the peep of day.</p> <p>43. I will kiss my lifeless king, Ere thou thy bloody corslet layest aside. Thy hair is, Helgi! tumid with sweat of death; My prince is all bathed in slaughter-dew; Cold, clammy are the hands of Hogni's son. How shall I, prince! for this make thee amends?</p> <p>Helgi 43. Thou art alone the cause,<sup>7</sup> Sigrun of Sefafioll! That Helgi is with sorrow's dew suffused. Thou weapest, gold-adorned! cruel tears, Sun-bright daughter of the south! ere to sleep thou goest; Each one falls bloody on the prince's breast, Wet, cold, and piercing, with sorrow big.</p> <p>44. We shall surely drink delicious draughts, Though we have lost life and lands. No one shall a song of mourning sing, Though on my breast he wounds behold. Now are women in the mound enclosed,</p>	<p>(VIII)<sup>75</sup></p> <p>[P8a] One of Sigrun's maidens went one evening to Helgi's hill, and saw that Helgi rode to the hill with many men, The maiden said:</p> <p>39. "Is this a dream   that methinks I see, Or the doom of the gods,<sup>76</sup>   that dead men ride, And hither spurring   urge your steeds, Or is home-coming now   to the heroes granted?"</p> <p>Helgi spake: 40. "No dream is this   that thou thinkest to see, Nor the end of the world,   though us thou beholdest, And hither spurring   we urge our steeds, Nor is home-coming now   to the heroes granted."<sup>77</sup></p> <p>The maiden went home and said to Sigrun:</p> <p>41. "Go forth, Sigrun,   from Sevafjoll, If fain the lord   of the folk wouldst find; (The hill is open,   Helgi is come;) The sword-tracks<sup>78</sup> bleed;   the monarch bade That thou his wounds   shouldst now make well."</p> <p>Sigrun went in the hill to Helgi, and said:</p> <p>42. "Now am I glad   of our meeting together, As Othin's hawks,   so eager for prey, When slaughter and flesh   all warm they scent, Or dew-wet see   the red of day.</p> <p>43. "First will I kiss   the lifeless king, Ere off the bloody   byrnie thou cast; With frost thy hair   is heavy, Helgi, And damp thou art   with the dew of death; (Ice-cold hands   has Hogni's kinsman,<sup>79</sup> What, prince, can I   to bring thee ease?)"<sup>80</sup></p> <p>Helgi spake: 44. "Thou alone, Sigrun   of Sevafjoll, Art cause that Helgi   with dew is heavy; Gold-decked maid,   thy tears are grievous, (Sun-bright south-maid,<sup>81</sup>   ere thou sleepest;) Each falls like blood   on the hero's breast, (Burned-out, cold,   and crushed with care.)"<sup>82</sup></p> <p>45.<sup>83</sup> "Well shall we drink   a noble draught, Though love and lands   are lost to me; No man a song   of sorrow shall sing, Though bleeding wounds   are on my breast; Now in the hill   our brides we hold,</p>	<p>VII.</p> <p>One of Sigrún's bondmaids went at eventide past the barrow and beheld Helgi riding toward it with many men.</p> <p><i>The bondmaid said:</i> 40. "Is't a dream-sight only my eyes behold, Or the doom of the gods—dead men riding! With spurs ye urge to speed your horses: Or may the heroes wend home again?"</p> <p><i>(Helgi said:)</i> 41. "Nor dream-sight only thin eyes behold, Nor world's end is't, though us thou see'st With spurs urging to speed our horses; Nor may the heroes wend home again."<sup>128</sup></p> <p><i>The bondmaid went back and said to Sigrún:</i></p> <p>42. "Come out, Sigrún of Seva Fells, If the folk-warrior to find thee list: Helgi is here, his howe, open; His wounds do bleed: he begs of thee To stay the bloody stream from his breast."</p> <p><i>Sigrún went into the mound to Helgi and said:</i></p> <p>43. "As fain am I to find thee, Helgi, As Óthin's hawks,<sup>129</sup> hungry for meat, When war they scent and warm corpses, And dew besprent the daylight see.</p> <p>44. "The lifeless king to kiss I list, Ere the bloody byrnie thou unbucklest; Thy hair, Helgi, 'tis hoar with frost, With dew-of-wounds<sup>130</sup> all wet art thou. Clammy the hands of Hogni's kinsman,<sup>131</sup> How shall I, hero, find help for that?"</p> <p><i>(Helgi said:)</i> 45. "'Tis Sigrún's doing, of Seva Fells, That Helgi drips with the dew-of-sorrow:<sup>132</sup> Woman sun-bright, southern.<sup>133</sup> Ere to sleep thou goest, Thou ceaseless, sadly salt tears weapest; Falls each on, bloody, on the breast of the king, Icy, festering, full of sorrow.</p> <p>46. "Is this wondrous wine<sup>134</sup> a welcome drink, Though life and land be lost for ay; Songs of sadness shall no one sing, Albeit my breast doth bleed with wounds: Now hath my bride into barrow come,</p>
--	---	--

<p>Daughters of kings, with us the dead.</p> <p>Sigrun prepares a bed in the mound.</p> <p>35. Here, Helgi! have I for thee A peaceful couch prepared, for the Ylfings' son. On thy breast I will, chieftain! repose, As in my hero's lifetime I was wont.</p> <p>Helgi 46. Nothing I now declare unlooked for, At Sefafioll, late or early, Since in a corpse's arms thou sleepest, Hogni's fair daughter! in a mound, And thou art living, daughter of kings!</p> <p>47. Time 'tis for me to ride on the reddening ways: Let the pale horse tread the aerial path. I towards the west must go over Vindhialm's bridge, Ere Salgofnir awakens heroes.</p> <p>Helgi and his attendants rode their way, but Sigrun and hers proceeded to their habitation. The following evening Sigrun ordered her serving-maid to hold watch at the mound; but at nightfall, when Sigrun came thither, she said:</p> <p>48. Now would he come, if he to come intended, Sigmund's son, from Odin's halls. I think the hope lessens of the king's coming, Since on the ash's boughs the eagles sit, And all the folk to the dreams' tryst are hastening.</p> <p>Serving-maid 49. Be not so rash alone to go, daughter of heroes! To the house of draugs:<sup>8</sup> more powerful are, In the night-season, all dead warriors, Than in the light of day.</p> <p>Sigrun's life was shortened by grief and mourning. It was a belief in ancient times that men were regenerated, but that is now regarded as an old crone's fancy. Helgi and Sigrun are said to have been regenerated. He was then called Helgi Haddingjaskadi, and she Kara Halfdan's daughter, as it is said in the songs of Kara; and she also was a Valkyria.</p>	<p>The heroes' loves,   by their husbands dead."<sup>84</sup></p> <p>Sigrun made ready a bed in the hill.</p> <p>46. "Here a bed   I have made for thee, Helgi, To rest thee from care,   thou kin of the Ylfings; I will make thee sink   to sleep in my arms, As once I lay   with the living king."</p> <p>Helgi spake: 47. "Now do I say   that in Sevafjoll Aught may happen,   early or late, Since thou sleepest clasped   in a corpse's arms, So fair in the hill,   the daughter of Hogni! (Living thou comest,   a daughter of kings.)"<sup>85</sup></p> <p>48. "Now must I ride   the reddened ways, And my bay steed set   to tread the sky; Westward I go   to wind-helm's bridges,<sup>86</sup> Ere Salgofnir<sup>87</sup> wakes   the warrior throng."</p> <p>[P8b] Then Helgi and his followers rode on their way, and the women went home to the dwelling. Another evening Sigrun bade the maiden keep watch at the hill. And at sunset when Sigrun came to the hill she said:</p> <p>49.<sup>88</sup> "Now were he come,   if come he might, Sigmund's son,   from Othin's seat; Hope grows dim   of the hero's return When eagles sit   on the ash-tree boughs, And men are seeking   the meeting of dreams."<sup>89</sup></p> <p>The Maiden said: 50. "Mad thou wouldst seem   alone to seek, Daughter of heroes,   the house of the dead; For mightier now   at night are all The ghosts of the dead   than when day is bright."</p> <p>[P8c] Sigrun was early dead of sorrow and grief. It was believed in olden times that people were born again, but that is now called old wives' folly. Of Helgi and Sigrun it is said that they were born again; he became Helgi Haddingjaskati, and she Kara the daughter of Halfdan, as is told in the Lay of Kara, and she was a Valkyrie.<sup>90</sup></p>	<p>The maid praised of me, to me, the dead!"</p> <p>Sigrún made ready a bed in the mound. <i>She said:</i></p> <p>47. "A bed made I ready for both of us, 'Tis free from care, kingly Helgi; In thy arms will I, atheling, sleep, As in life, life one, I would lie with thee."</p> <p><i>(Helgi said:)</i> 48. "No wonder, ween I, will unwonted seem, Sooner or later, at Seva Fells, Since lies with lifeless leader's body In the howe, Hogni's white-armed daughter— With the dead the quick, the queenly woman."</p> <p><i>(When morning dawned, Helgi arose and said:)<sup>135</sup></i></p> <p>49. "Along reddening roads to ride I hie me, On fallow steed aery paths to fly: To the west shall I of Windhelm's bridge,<sup>136</sup> Ere Valholl's warriors wakes Salgofnir."<sup>137</sup></p> <p>Helgi and his men rode on their way, but Sigrún and her women wended home. On the next evening, Sigrún had a maid watch by the mound. <i>But when the day was at an end, Sigrún came to the mound and said:</i></p> <p>50. Come had by now, if to come he wished, The son of Sigmund from the seat of Óthin; Little hope that hither the hero will ride, Now the eagles perch on ash-tree limbs, And all hosts hie them to the home of dreams."<sup>138</sup></p> <p><i>(The bondmaid said:)</i> 51. "'Twere folly, lady, to fare alone, Thou Hogni's daughter, to dead man's howe. All dead men's ghosts do grow more dread As daylight darkens to dimness of night."</p> <p>Sigrún lived but a short while longer, for grief and sorrow. It was the belief I olden times that men were born again, but that is now called old women's superstition. Helgi and Sigrún are said to have been born again as Helgi Haddingjaskati<sup>139</sup> and Kára, the daughter of Hálfðan, as is told in "The Lay of Kára."<sup>140</sup> She was a Valkyrie.</p>
---	--	--

<sup>1</sup> Other favorite themes, such as the death of Brynhild, the fall of the Niflungs, and Guthrún's plaint, also received parallel treatment by two or more poets.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly, remnants of the *Kárljóð*, or "Lay of Kára," mentioned in the Final Prose.

<sup>3</sup> In England, in "Sweet William's Ghost"; see Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, II, 226; in Germany, Bürger's "Leonore."

<sup>4</sup> Slaughtering and carrying off the cattle on the sea-shore.

<sup>5</sup> The Valkyriur.

<sup>6</sup> Dark words of deadly import.

<sup>7</sup> The superstition commemorated in this strophe is, no doubt, the origin of some very beautiful ballads in the later literature of Scandinavia and Germany referring to this superstition:

"When thou, my dear, art cheerful,  
And easy in thy mind,  
The coffin where I slumber  
Is all with roses lined.  
But oft as thou'rt in sorrow,  
And bow'd with grief so sore,  
Is all the while my coffin  
Brim full of blood and gore."

<sup>8</sup> Probably house of draffs; place of swine, swill, lees.

<sup>9</sup> In the manuscript the poem is headed "Of the Volsungs," but most editions give the overall work the title used here, *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*.

<sup>10</sup> [Prose numbering in brackets inserted by this Compiler – RSJ]

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund: cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 6 and note, which also mentions Volsung.

<sup>12</sup> Borghild and Bralund: cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 1 and note.

<sup>13</sup> Helgi: the annotator's explanation that the child was named after Helgi Hjorvarthsson is a naive way of getting around the difficulties created by the two sets of Helgi stories. He might equally well have said that the new Helgi was the old one born again, as he accounts for Sigrun in this way ("she was Svava reborn").

<sup>14</sup> Hagal: not elsewhere mentioned; it was a common custom to have boys brought up by foster-parents.

<sup>15</sup> Hunding and Hundland: cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 10 and note.

<sup>16</sup> Volsungs and Ylfings: regarding this confusion of family names cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 5 and note.

<sup>17</sup> Haeming: his name does not appear in the list of Hunding's sons. It is quite possible that these opening stanzas (1-4) do not refer to Hunding at all.

<sup>18</sup> Hunding: it has been suggested that the compiler may have inserted this name to fit what he thought the story ought to be, in place of Haeming, or even Hadding. If stanzas 1-4 are a fragment of the *Karuljóth* (Lay of Kara), this latter suggestion is quite reasonable, for in that poem, which we do not possess, but which supplied material for the compilers of the *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*, Helgi appears as Helgi Haddingjaskati (cf. final prose note). Nothing beyond this one name connects stanzas 1-4 with Hunding.

<sup>19</sup> Helgi appears to have stayed with Hunding under the name of Hamal, but now, thinking himself safe, he sends word of who he really is.

<sup>20</sup> Hagal: Helgi's foster-father, who naturally protects him.

<sup>21</sup> Blind: leader of the band sent to capture Helgi.

<sup>22</sup> The manuscript indicates line 2 as the beginning of the stanza, the copyist evidently regarding line 1 as prose. This has caused various rearrangements in the different editions.

<sup>23</sup> Barley: the word literally means "foreign grain," and would afford an interesting study to students of early commerce.

<sup>24</sup> The manuscript marks line 3 as the beginning of a stanza.

<sup>25</sup> Sigar and Hogni: it seems unlikely that Hagal refers to the Hogni who was Sigrun's father, for this part of the story has nothing whatever to do with Sigrun. As Hagal is, of course, deliberately lying, it is useless to test any part of his speech for accuracy.

<sup>26</sup> Possibly two stanzas with one line lost, or perhaps the lines in parenthesis are spurious; each editor has his own guess.

<sup>27</sup> No division indicated in the manuscript.

<sup>28</sup> Brunavagar ("Bruni's Sea"): mentioned only in this section.

<sup>29</sup> Strand-slaughtering: a killing on the shore of cattle stolen in a raid.

<sup>30</sup> Hogni and Sigrun: cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 17 and note; the annotator's notion of Sigrun as the reincarnated Svava (cf. *Helgakviða Hjorvarthssonar*, concluding prose note) represents a naive form of scholarship. There is nothing in stanzas 5-12 which clearly identifies Sigrun as a Valkyrie, or which, except for the last line of stanza 12, identifies the speaker as Sigrun. Some editors, therefore, call her simply "the Valkyrie," while Vigfusson, who thinks this section is also a remnant of the *Karuljóth*, calls her Kara.

<sup>31</sup> The manuscript does not indicate the speakers.

<sup>32</sup> Hamal: Helgi's assumption of this name seems to link this section (stanzas 5-12) with stanza 1.

<sup>33</sup> Hlesey ("Island of Hler"—i.e., Aegir, the sea-god): generally identified as the Danish island of Laso; cf. *Harbarthsljóth*, 37 and note.

<sup>34</sup> Guth: a Valkyrie (cf. *Voluspo*, 31) the birds of her sisters are the kites and ravens.

<sup>35</sup> Bragalund ("Bragi's Wood"): a mythical place. Bears: presumably Berserkers, regarding whom cf. *Hyndluljóth*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> The manuscript indicates line 5 as the beginning of a new stanza; some editors reject lines 1-2, while others make lines 5-6 into a fragmentary stanza.

<sup>37</sup> Helgi's meaning in lines 3-4 is that, although he has already declared himself an Ylfing (stanza 8, line 1), there are many heroes of that race, and he does not understand how Sigrun knows him to be Helgi.

<sup>38</sup> Slaughter-runes: equivocal or deceptive speech regarding the battle. The word "rune" had the meaning of "magic" or "mystery" long before it was applied to the signs or characters with which it was later identified.

<sup>39</sup> Some editors reject line 3, others line 5. The manuscript omits Helgi's name in line 5, thereby destroying both the sense and the meter. Vigfusson, following his *Karuljóth* theory (cf. note on prose following stanza 4), changes Hogni to Halfdan, father of Kara.

<sup>40</sup> The manuscript indicates no division. Most of this prose passage is evidently based on *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*; the only new features are the introduction of Starkath as a third son of Granmar, which is clearly an error based on a misunderstanding of stanza 19, and the reference to the kings' meeting, based on stanza 15. Kings' meetings, or councils, were by no means unusual; the North in early days was prolific in kings. For the remaining

---

names, cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*: Granmar, stanza 19; Hothbrodd, stanza 33; Gothmund, stanza 33; Svarin's hill, stanza 32; Logafjoll, stanza 13; .41f, Eyjolf, Hjorvarth and Hervarth, stanza 14. The old Volsung lay: cf. Introductory Note.

<sup>41</sup> Some editions combine lines 3-4, Or line 4, with part of stanza 14.

<sup>42</sup> The lines of stanzas 14 and 15 are here rearranged in accordance with Bugge's emendation; in the manuscript they stand as follows: lines 3-4 of stanza 14; stanza 15; lines 1-2 of stanza 14. This confusion has given rise to various editorial conjectures.

<sup>43</sup> The manuscript indicates no division. Here again, the annotator has drawn practically all his information from *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, which he specifically mentions and even quotes. The only new features are the names of Hogni's sons, Bragi and Dag. Bragi is mentioned in stanza 19, though it is not there stated that he is Hogni's son. Dag, who figures largely in stanzas 28-34, is a puzzle, for the verse never names him, and it is an open question where the annotator got his name.

<sup>44</sup> Frekastein: cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, 39 and note.

<sup>45</sup> As is written: the two lines are quoted, with a change of two words, from *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 33.

<sup>46</sup> Sinfjotli: cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 6 and note, and stanzas 33-48, in which the whole dialogue is given.

<sup>47</sup> Loyalty: apparently the annotator got this bit of information out of stanza 29, in which Sigrun refers to the oaths which her brother had sworn to Helgi.

<sup>48</sup> Seva fjoll ("Wet Mountain"): mentioned only in this poem.

<sup>49</sup> Giant-steeds: wolves, the usual steeds of giantesses; cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 56.

<sup>50</sup> Maid: the word thus rendered is the same doubtful one which appears in *Volundarkvitha*, 1 and 5, and which may mean specifically a Valkyrie (Gering translates it "helmed" or "heroic") or simply "wise." Cf. *Volundarkvitha*, note on introductory prose.

<sup>51</sup> Norns: cf. *Voluspa*, 20 and note. In stanza 33 Dag similarly lays the blame for the murder he has committed on Othin.

<sup>52</sup> Bragi: probably Sigrun's brother.

<sup>53</sup> This stanza looks like an interpolation, and there is little or nothing to connect it with the slaying of Granmar's sons. In the manuscript line 2, indicated as the beginning of a stanza, precedes line 1. Hlebjorg ("Sea-Mountain") and Styrkleifar ("Battle-Cliffs"): place names not elsewhere mentioned. Of Hrollaug's sons nothing further is known.

<sup>54</sup> Starkath: this name gives a hint of the origin of this stanza, for Saxo Grammaticus tells of the slaying of the Swedish hero Starkath ("The Strong") the son of Storverk, and describes how his severed head bit the ground in anger (cf. line 4). In all probability this stanza is from an entirely different poem, dealing with the Starkath story, and the annotator's attempt to identify the Swedish hero as a third son of Granmar is quite without foundation.

<sup>55</sup> The difference of meter would of itself be enough to indicate that this stanza comes from an entirely different poem. A few editions assign the whole stanza to Helgi, but lines 3-4. are almost certainly Sigrun's, and the manuscript begins line 3 with a large capital letter following a period.

<sup>56</sup> With this stanza begins the dispute between Gothmund and Sinfjotli which, together with Helgi's rebuke to his half-brother, appears at much greater length in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 33-48. It is introduced here manifestly in the wrong place. The version here given is almost certainly the older of the two, but the resemblance is so striking, and in some cases (notably in Helgi's rebuke) the stanzas are so nearly identical, that it seems probable that the composer of the first *Helgi Hundingsbane* lay borrowed directly from the poem of which the present dialogue is a fragment.

<sup>57</sup> Flag: the banner ("gunnfani," cf. "gonfalon") here serves as the signal for war instead of the red shield mentioned in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 34.

<sup>58</sup> Battle-light: perhaps the "northern lights."

<sup>59</sup> Lines 3-4 are obscure, and in the manuscript show signs of error. Helgi had not at this time, so far as we know, conquered any of Hothbrodd's land. The realm of the fishes, in line 4, presumably means the sea, but the word here translated "fishes" is obscure, and many editors treat it as a proper name, "the realm of the Fjorsungs," but without further suggestion as to who or what the Fjorsungs are.

<sup>60</sup> The word here translated swords is a conjectural emendation; the manuscript implies merely an invitation to continue the quarrel at Frekastein.

<sup>61</sup> Hothbrodd: apparently he is here considered as present during the dispute; some editors, in defiance of the meter, have emended the line to mean "Time is it for Hothbrodd | vengeance to have."

<sup>62</sup> cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 47-48, which are nearly identical to stanzas 26-27 here. Stanza 27 in the manuscript is abbreviated to the first letters of the words, except for line 5, which does not appear in the other poem, and which looks like an interpolation.

<sup>63</sup> Here begins a new section of the poem, dealing with Helgi's death at the hands of Dag, Sigrun's brother. The prose note is based wholly on stanzas 28-34, except for the introduction of Dag's name (cf. note on prose following stanza 16), and the reference to Othin's spear, the weapon which made victory certain, and which the annotator brought in doubtless on the strength of Dag's statement that Othin was responsible for Helgi's death (stanza 33).

<sup>64</sup> Fjoturlund ("Fetter-Wood"): mentioned only here and in stanza 28.

<sup>65</sup> Line 5 looks like an interpolation.

<sup>66</sup> Leipt: this river is mentioned in *Grimnismol*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Uth: a daughter of the sea-god Aegir; regarding her sacred stone we know nothing. According to the annotator, Dag's life had been spared because he swore loyalty to Helgi.

<sup>68</sup> No gap indicated in the manuscript, but most editors have assumed that either the first or the last two lines have been lost. Bugge adds the line in brackets.

<sup>69</sup> Vandilsve ("Vandil's Shrine): who Vandil was we do not know; this and Vigdalar ("Battle-Dale") are purely mythical places.

<sup>70</sup> Vigblaer ("Battle-Breather") Helgi's horse.

<sup>71</sup> Line 5 may be spurious.

<sup>72</sup> Line 5 (or possibly line 4) may be spurious. Cf. *Guthrunarkvitha I*, 17, and *Guthrunarkvitha II*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Valhall, etc.: there is no indication as to where the annotator got this notion of Helgi's sharing Othin's rule. It is most unlikely that such an idea ever found place in any of the Helgi poems, or at least in the earlier ones; probably it was a late development of the tradition in a period when Othin was no longer taken seriously.

<sup>74</sup> This stanza apparently comes from an otherwise lost passage containing a contest of words between Helgi and Hunding; indeed the name of Hunding may have been substituted for another one beginning with "H," and the stanza originally have had no connection with Helgi at all. The annotator inserts it here through an obvious misunderstanding, taking it to be Helgi's application of the power conferred on him by Othin.

<sup>75</sup> Here begins the final section (stanzas 39-50), wherein Sigrun visits the dead Helgi in his burial hill.

<sup>76</sup> Doom of the gods: the phrase "ragna rok" has been rather unfortunately Anglicized into the work "ragnarok" (the Norse term is not a proper name), and rok, "doom," has been confused with rokkr, "darkness," and so translated "dusk of the Gods," or "Gottterdammerung."

<sup>77</sup> In the manuscript most of this stanza is abbreviated to the first letters of the words.

<sup>78</sup> Sword-tracks: wounds.

<sup>79</sup> Kinsman: literally "son-in-law."

---

<sup>80</sup> Possibly lines 5-6 are spurious, or part of a stanza the rest of which has been lost. It has also been suggested that two lines may have been lost after line 2, making a new stanza of lines 3-6.

<sup>81</sup> South-maid: cf. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 17 and note.

<sup>82</sup> Lines 4 and 6 have been marked by various editors as probably spurious. Others regard lines 1-2 as the beginning of a stanza the rest of which has been lost, or combine lines 5-6 with lines 5-6 of stanza 45 to make a new stanza.

<sup>83</sup> Both lines 3-4 and lines 5-6 have been suspected by editors of being interpolated, and the loss of two lines has also been suggested.

<sup>84</sup> Brides: the plural here is perplexing. Gering insists that only Sigrun is meant, and translates the word as singular, but both "brides" and "loves" are uncompromisingly plural in the text. Were the men of Helgi's ghostly following likewise visited by their wives? The annotator may have thought so, for in the prose he mentions the "women" returning to the house, although, of course, this may refer simply to Sigrun and the maid.

<sup>85</sup> Line 5 (or possibly line 4) may be interpolated.

<sup>86</sup> Wind-helm: the sky; the bridge is Bifrost, the rainbow (cf. *Grímnismál*, 29).

<sup>87</sup> Salgofnir ("Hall-Crower"): the cock Gollinkambi who awakes the gods and warriors for the last battle.

<sup>88</sup> Many editors assign this speech to the maid. Line 5 (or 4) may be spurious.

<sup>89</sup> Meeting of dreams ("Dream-Thing"): sleep.

<sup>90</sup> The attitude of the annotator is clearly revealed by his contempt for those who put any faith in such "old wives' folly" as the idea that men and women could be reborn. As in the case of *Helgi Hjorvarthsson*, the theory of the hero's rebirth seems to have developed in order to unite around a single Helgi the various stories in which the hero is slain. The Lay of Kara (*Karuljóth*) is lost, although, as has been pointed out, parts of the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* may be remnants of it, but we find the main outlines of the story in the *Hromundar saga Greipssonar*, whose compilers appear to have known the *Karuljóth*. In the saga Helgi Haddingjaskati (Helgi the Haddings' Hero) is protected by the Valkyrie Kara, who flies over him in the form of a swan (note once more the Valkyrie swan-maiden confusion); but in his fight with Hromund he swings his sword so high that he accidentally gives Kara a mortal wound, whereupon Hromund cuts off his head. As this makes the third recorded death of Helgi (once at the hands of Alf, once at those of Dag, and finally in the fight with Hromund), the phenomenon of his rebirth is not surprising. The points of resemblance in all the Helgi stories, including the one told in the lost *Karuljóth*, are sufficiently striking so that it is impossible not to see in them a common origin, and not to believe that Helgi the son of Hjorvarth, Helgi the son of Sigmund and Helgi the Haddings'-Hero (not to mention various other Helgis who probably figured in songs and stories now lost) were all originally the same Helgi who appears in the early traditions of Denmark.

<sup>91</sup> "The Skilful."

<sup>92</sup> Probably invented *ad hoc*. It is not the same as the Hunland over which Buthli, and after him Atli, held sway.

<sup>93</sup> Seeing that in the lays Helgi is the kinsman of Sigmund and Sinfjotli, the Collector infers that he is a Volsung. Whether this corresponds to the oldest stratum of the legend is another matter.

<sup>94</sup> Helgi's father (?).

<sup>95</sup> Kenning for "Wolf": an allusion to the name of Helgi's race, the Ylfings, "Wolfings." Hamal, "Wether."

<sup>96</sup> This line is supplied for the last sentence of the Prose.

<sup>97</sup> Blind, "the Blinding," "Deceiving One," is the typical name of an evil counselor.

<sup>98</sup> Compare with the situation in *Grottasöngur*.

<sup>99</sup> That is, she is a Valkyrie.

<sup>100</sup> Supplied after Bugge.

<sup>101</sup> This barbaric practice of the earlier Vikings was condemned in later times.

<sup>102</sup> In the Kattegat, between Jutland and Sweden. See *Hárbarzljóð*, St.37.

<sup>103</sup> See *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, St.33 and note.

<sup>104</sup> Gunn, "Battle," is a Valkyrie, her fowls hence the birds of prey—eagles and ravens.

<sup>105</sup> Figuratively for "men made captives."

<sup>106</sup> He excuses his warriors—they are ravenous after long privations at sea.

<sup>107</sup> It was considered part of wisdom in a warrior to conceal his identity. Compare with *Fáfnismál*, St.1 ff.

<sup>108</sup> With her father's consent. See St.17.

<sup>109</sup> In the original, St.15 follows St.16.

<sup>110</sup> The following prose reproduces the contents of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, Sts.22 ff.

<sup>111</sup> That is, "The First Lay," St.32.

<sup>112</sup> He is identical in name and behavior in death with the Starkath, the son of Stórverk, who figures in Saxo Grammaticus as the typical representative of the Heroic Age, and in the "Víkarsbálkr" of the *Gautreks saga*. The stanza is no doubt a later interpolation.

<sup>113</sup> The reference probably is to that famous Hild who was the cause of everlasting combat between her father, King Hogni, and her lover, Hethin, the so-called Battle of the Hjathnings (*Skáldskaparmál*, Ch.47). However, the line is doubtful. The entire stanza is probably a later interpolation.

<sup>114</sup> A red-glowing morning sky betokens carnage, as in "The Song of the Valkyries ("Darraðarljóð"), *Njáls saga*, Ch.157.

<sup>115</sup> The meaning of the second half of the stanza is obscure. Possibly, Sinfjotli begins to taunt him, "your lands and treasures are as good as won."

<sup>116</sup> Identical with Sts.45-46 of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*.

<sup>117</sup> Sigmund also finally succumbs to Óthin's spear (*Volsunga saga*, Ch.11).

<sup>118</sup> "Fetter Grove." Probably identical with the one in the land of the Semnones mentioned by Tacitus (*Germania*, Ch.39).

<sup>119</sup> He is forced by the duty of blood revenge.

<sup>120</sup> Leiptr is one of the rivers of the nether world (*Grímnismál*, St.28). Hence an oath by its water corresponds to the Greeks' swearing by Styx.

<sup>121</sup> "The Wave," one of Ægir's daughters. See *Guðrúnarkviða III*, St.3, and *Atlakviða*, St.33, for mention of the oaths such as those sworn by Dag.

<sup>122</sup> Supplied after Bugge's and Grundtvig's suggestion.

<sup>123</sup> Supplied by the Translator.

<sup>124</sup> See the like statement in *Hárbarzljóð*, St.24.

<sup>125</sup> That is, unless I see him back in the light of day, alive.

---

<sup>126</sup> At early dawn. See *Grímnismál*, St.26. The same simile occurs in *Guðrúnarkviða* I, St.18 and *Guðrúnarkviða* II, St.2.

<sup>127</sup> As Gering observes, the sentiment here expressed is altogether unbecoming Helgi as spoken to a brave foe felled in honorable combat, since it goes straight counter to Northern conceptions of etiquette. The stanza is probably a fragment of a flyting between Sinfjotli and Hunding before battle.

<sup>128</sup> They are not allowed to return “home” to earth, but only for a last stay.

<sup>129</sup> The ravens.

<sup>130</sup> Kenning for “blood.”

<sup>131</sup> This is Helgi’s status as his daughter’s husband.

<sup>132</sup> Kenning for “blood.”

<sup>133</sup> Probably only honorific. See *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I, St.16.

<sup>134</sup> We must suppose that Sigrún has brought it for the bridal feast.

<sup>135</sup> Added by the Translator.

<sup>136</sup> That is, heaven’s bridge, Bifrost. See *Grímnismál*, St.45.

<sup>137</sup> That is, before the cock Salgofnir wakes the einherjar to their daily combat. *Vafþrúðnismál*, St.40.

<sup>138</sup> That is, when men court sleep?

<sup>139</sup> “Prince of the Haddingjar.”

<sup>140</sup> Now lost. It was known to the author of the *Hrómundar saga Greipssonar*.