

SIGRDRÍFUMÁL (“The Ballad of the Victory-Bringer”)
OR,
BRYNHILDARLJÓÐ (“The Lay of Brynhild”)

Bellows’ Introduction (1936)

The so-called *Sigrdrifumol*, which immediately follows the *Fafnismol* in the *Codex Regius* without any indication of a break, and without separate title, is unquestionably the most chaotic of all the poems in the Eddic collection. The end of it has been entirely lost, for the fifth folio of eight sheets is missing from *Regius*, the gap coming after the first line of stanza 29 of this poem. That stanza has been completed, and eight more have been added, from much later paper manuscripts, but even so the conclusion of the poem is in obscurity.

Properly speaking, however, the strange conglomeration of stanzas which the compiler of the collection has left for us, and which, in much the same general form, seems to have lain before the authors of the *Volsungasaga*, in which eighteen of its stanzas are quoted, is not a poem at all. Even its customary title is an absurd error. The mistake made by the annotator in thinking that the epithet "sigrdrifa," rightly applied to Brynhild as a "bringer of victory," was a proper name has already been explained and commented on (note on *Fafnismol*, 44). Even if the collection of stanzas were in any real sense a poem, which it emphatically is not, it is certainly not the "Ballad of Sigrdrifa" which it is commonly called. "Ballad of Brynhild" would be a sufficiently suitable title, and I have here brought the established name "*Sigrdrifumol*" into accord with this by translating the epithet instead of treating it as a proper name.

Even apart from the title, however, the *Sigrdrifumol* has little claim to be regarded as a distinct poem, nor is there any indication that the compiler did so regard it. Handicapped as we are by the loss of the concluding section, and of the material which followed it on those missing pages, we can yet see that the process which began with the prose *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, and which, interrupted by the insertion of the *Gripisspo*, went on through the *Reginsmol* and the *Fafnismol*, continued through as much of the *Sigrdrifumol* as is left to us. In other words, the compiler told the story of Sigurth in mixed prose and verse, using whatever verse he could find without much questioning as to its origin, and filling in the gaps with his own prose. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*, *Reginsmol*, *Fafnismol*, and *Sigrdrifumol* are essentially a coherent unit, but one of the compiler's making only; they represent neither one poem nor three distinct poems, and the divisions and titles which have been almost universally adopted by editors are both arbitrary and misleading.

The *Sigrdrifumol* section as we now have it is an extraordinary piece of patchwork. It is most unlikely that the compiler himself brought all these fragments together for the first time; little by little, through a process of accretion and also, unluckily, through one of elimination, the material grew into its present shape. Certainly the basis of it is a poem dealing with the finding of Brynhild by Sigurth, but of this original poem only five stanzas (2-4 and 20-21) can be identified with any degree of confidence. To these five stanzas should probably, however, be added some, if not all, of the passage (stanzas 6-12) in which Brynhild teaches Sigurth the magic runes. These stanzas of rune-lore attracted sundry similar passages from other sources, including stanza 5, in which a magic draught is administered (not necessarily by Brynhild or to Sigurth), the curious rune-chant in stanzas 15-17, and stanzas 13-14 and 18-19. Beginning with stanza 22, and running to the end of the fragment (stanza 37), is a set of numbered counsels closely resembling the *Loddfafnismol* (*Hovamol*, stanzas 111-138), which manifestly has nothing whatever to do with Brynhild. Even in this passage there are probably interpolations (stanzas 25, 27, 30, 34, and 36). Finally, and bespeaking the existence at some earlier time of another Sigurth-Brynhild poem, is stanza 1, sharply distinguished by its metrical form from stanzas 2-4 and 20-21. Many critics argue that stanzas 6-10 of *Helreith Brynildar* belonged originally to the same poem as stanza 1 of the *Sigrdrifumol*.

The *Sigrdrifumol*, then, must be regarded simply as a collection of fragments, most of them originally having no relation to the main subject. All of the story, the dialogue and the characterization are embodied in stanzas 1-4 and 20-21 and in the prose notes accompanying the first four stanzas; all of the rest might equally well (or better) be transferred to the *Hovamol*, where its character entitles it to a place. Yet stanzas 2-4 are as fine as anything in Old Norse poetry, and it is out of the scanty material of these three stanzas that Wagner constructed much of the third act of "Siegfried."

The *Sigrdrifumol* represents almost exclusively the contributions of the North to the Sigurth tradition (cf. introductory note to the *Gripisspo*). Brynhild, here disguised by the annotator as "Sigdrifa," appears simply as a battle-maid and supernatural dispenser of wisdom; there is no trace of the daughter of Buthli and the rival of Guthrun. There is, however, so little of the "poem" which can definitely be assigned to the Sigurth cycle that it is impossible to trace back any of the underlying narrative substance.

The nature and condition of the material have made editorial conjectures and emendations very numerous, and as most of the guesses are neither conclusive nor particularly important, only a few of them are mentioned in the notes.

Hollander's Introduction (1962)

There is no break in the *Codex Regius* between this lay the "The Lay of Fáfnir," which it resembles in style and manner¹—in the short narrative portions, and in the lyric and didactic stanzas (*ljóðaháttir* and irregular verse forms) with connecting prose. Indeed, it has been suggested that, together with "The Lay of Regin," these snatches were collected into an original whole dealing with Sigurth's youth.

Nevertheless, this lay cannot, any more than the others, have been conceived as a whole. The stanzas on the use of runes and on the rules of conduct, constituting the bulk of the poem, manifestly have no internal connection with the fate of Sigurth. They may have been inserted from elsewhere: the stanzas on runes to accompany the ale "mixed with magic and mighty chants"; those on conduct, the hint of Sigdrifa's "loving counsel" desired by Sigurth (St.23). Both portions distinctly recall the collection of the *Hávamál* in content and style. The few remaining stanzas belong to the best in Eddic poetry, especially the fine invocation spoken by the Valkyrie on awaking.

Stanzas 6-23 are quoted, with a number of variants, in the close paraphrase of the *Völsunga saga*, Ch.20.

The metre is almost wholly *ljóðaháttir*. As with the two preceding lays, there is no definite clue to place of origin or date; but the thoroughly heathen tone makes early origin (ca. 1000) likely.

OUTLINE ²

[numbering according to Bellows]

	P1	Sigurth Discovers Brynhild
1		Proto-Brynhild Fragment: Sigurd Awakens the Sleeping Maiden
	P2	Sigurth Drinks the Memory Draught [after 2 in MS.]
2-4		Proto-Brynhild I: Brynhild's Waking Incantation
	P3	Brynhild Tells her Story: Of Hjalmgunnar & Odin's Punishment
5		The Magic Draught Administered [interpolation]
6-12		Brynhild Teaches Sigurd Magic Runes
13-14		Accretion on Rune-Lore I (proto-Hávamál)
15-17		The Rune Chant
18-19		Accretion on Rune-Lore II
20-21		Proto-Brynhild II: Of Sigurd's Choice
22-37/		Sigdrifa's Counsels [w/interpolations @ 25/27/30/34/36]

Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Hollander (1962)
Sigurd rode up the Hindarfjall, and directed his course southwards towards Frankland. In the fell he saw a great light, as if a fire were burning, which blazed up to the sky. On approaching it, there stood a "skialdborg," and over it a banner. Sigurd went into the skialdborg, and saw a warrior lying within it asleep, completely armed. He first took the helmet off the warrior's head, and saw that it was a woman. Her corslet was as fast as if it had grown to her body. With his sword Gram he ripped the corslet from the upper opening downwards, and then through both sleeves. He then took the corslet off from her, when she awoke, sat up and, on seeing Sigurd, said: 1. What has my corslet cut? why from sleep have I started? Who has cast from me the fallow bands? Sigurd Sigmund's son has just now ript the raven's perch,³ With Sigurd's sword. She 2. Long have I slept, long been with sleep oppressed, Long are mortals' sufferings! Odin is the cause that I have been Unable to cast off torpor. [P2] Sigurd sat down and asked her name. She then took a horn filled with mead, and gave him the <i>minnis-cup</i>. She 3. Hail to Day! Hail to the sons of Day! To Night and her daughter hail! With placid eyes behold us here, And here sitting give us victory. 4. Hail to the Æsir! Hail to the Asyniur! Hail to the bounteous earth! Words and wisdom give to us noble twain, And healing hands⁴ while we live. [P3] She was named Sigrdrifa, and was a Valkyria. She said that two kings had made war on each other, one of whom was named Hialmgunnar; he was old and a great warrior, and Odin had promised him victory. The other was Agnar, a brother of Hoda, whom no divinity would patronize. Sigrdrifa overcame Hialmgunnar in battle; in revenge for which Odin pricked her with a sleep-thorn, and declared that henceforth she should never have victory in	[P1]⁹ Sigurth rode up on Hindarfjoll¹⁰ and turned southward toward the land of the Franks.¹¹ On the mountain he saw a great light, as if fire were burning, and the glow reached up to heaven. And when he came thither, there stood a tower of shields,¹² and above it was a banner. Sigurth went into the shield-tower, and saw that a man lay there sleeping with all his war-weapons. First he took the helm from his head, and then he saw that it was a woman. The mail-coat was as fast as if it had grown to the flesh. Then he cut the mail-coat from the head-opening downward, and out to both the arm-holes. Then he took the mail-coat from her, and she awoke, and sat up and saw Sigurth, and said: 1.¹³ "What bit through the byrnie? how was broken my sleep? / Who made me free of the fetters pale?" He answered: "Sigmund's son, with Sigurth's sword, That late with flesh hath fed the ravens." [P2]¹⁴ Sigurth sat beside her and asked her name. She took a horn full of mead and gave him a memory-draught. 2.[3] "Hail, day! Hail, sons of day!¹⁵ And night and her daughter now!¹⁶ Look on us here with loving eyes, That waiting we victory win. 3.[4] "Hail to the gods! Ye goddesses, hail, And all the generous earth! Give to us wisdom and goodly speech, And healing hands, life-long. 4.[2] "Long did I sleep, my slumber was long, And long are the griefs of life; Othin decreed that I could not break The heavy spells of sleep." [P3] Her name was Sigrdrifa,¹⁷ and she was a Valkyrie. She said that two kings fought in battle; one was called Hialmgunnar,¹⁸ an old man but a mighty warrior, and Othin had promised him the victory, and The other was Agnar, brother of Autha, None he found who fain would shield him.¹⁹ Sigrdrifa slew Hialmgunnar in the battle, and Othin pricked her with the sleep-thorn in punishment for this, and said	Sigurth rode over Hindar Fell and made his way South to Frankland.⁶⁹ On the fell he saw a bright light, as though a fire were burning there, and it shone to very heaven. When he drew near, he found there a wall of shields, and a banner loomed above it. He entered into this wall of shields and saw that in it slept some one in full war weeds. Sigurth first lifted the helmet off the sleeper's head, and then he saw that it was a woman. Her coat of mail was tight about her as though it were grown to the flesh. With his sword Gram he slit the byrnie, from the neck down, and also both sleeves, and took it off. <i>Then she awoke and sate up, and beheld Sigurth, and said:</i> 1. "What slit my byrnie? How was broken my sleep? Who lifted from me the leaden weight?"⁷⁰ <i>He answered:</i> "‘Tis Sigmund's bairn—on Fáfnir's body Ravens batten⁷¹—‘tis Sigurth's brand." <i>(She said:)</i> 2.[3] "Hail to thee, day! Hail, ye day's sons! Hail, night and daughter of night!⁷² With blithe eyes look on both of us: Send to those sitting here speed!⁷³ 3. "Hail to you, gods! Hail, goddesses! Hail, earth that givest to all! Goodly spells and speech bespeak we from you, And healing hands, in this life."⁷⁴ [P2] Sigurth sate him down and asked her name. [P3] She said her name was Sigrdrifa and that she was a Valkyrie. She said that twain kings had fought. 4.[P3] "‘(Was Hialmgunnar⁷⁵ hight a hoary warrior; Had Valfather⁷⁶ vowed victory to him.)⁷⁷ Was the other Agnar, Autha's brother, To whom none ever help had given." [P3] Sigrdrifa felled Hialmgunnar in the battle, but Óthin in revenge pricked her with the sleep-thorn⁷⁸ and said that she should never henceforth fight in battle, but be wedded. "But I too made a vow that I should never be wedded unto a man who knew fear." (Then took she a horn full of mead and gave it to him, to bind him to her.)⁷⁹ <i>She said:</i>

battle, and should be given in marriage. "But I said to him, that I had bound myself by a vow not to espouse any man who could be made to fear." Sigurd answers, and implores her to teach him wisdom, as she had intelligence from all regions: Sigrdrifa 5. Beer I bear to thee, column⁵ of battle! With might mingled, and with bright glory: 'Tis full of song, and salutary saws, Of potent incantations, and joyous discourses. 6. <i>Sig</i>-runes thou must know, if victory (<i>sigr</i>) thou wilt have, / And on thy sword's hilt grave them; Some on the chapes, some on the guard, And twice name the name of Týr. 7. <i>Ol</i>-(beer-) runes thou must know, if thou wilt not That another's wife thy trust betray, if thou in her confide. On the horn must they be graven, and on the hand's back, Nnd Naud⁶ on the nail be scored. 8. A cup must be blessed, and against peril guarded, And garlick in the liquor cast: Then I know thou wilt never have Mead with treachery mingled. 9. <i>Biarg</i>-(help-) runes thou must know, if thou wilt help, And loose the child from women. In the palm they must be graven, and round the joints be clasped, / And the Disir prayed for aid. 10. <i>Brim</i>-(sea-) runes thou must know, if thou wilt have Secure afloat thy sailing steeds. On the prow they must be graven, and on the helm-blade, And with fire to the oar applied. No surge shall be so towering, nor waves so dark, But from the ocean thou safe shalt come. 11. <i>Lim</i>-(branch-) runes thou must know, if thou a leech wouldst be, / And wounds know how to heal. On the bark they must be graven, and on the leaves of trees, / Of those whose boughs bent eastward. 12. <i>Mal</i>-(speech-) runes thou must know, If thou wilt that no one for injury with hate requite thee. Those thou must wind, Those thou must wrap round, Those thou must altogether place in the assembly, Where people have into full court to go.	that she should never thereafter win victory in battle, but that she should be wedded. "And I said to him that I had made a vow in my turn, that I would never marry a man who knew the meaning of fear." Sigurth answered and asked her to teach him wisdom, if she knew of what took place in all the worlds. Sigrdrifa said: * * * * * 5.²⁰ "Beer I bring thee, tree of battle,²¹ Mingled of strength and mighty fame; Charms it holds and healing signs, Spells full good, and gladness-runes."²² ²³6. Winning-runes learn, if thou longest to win, And the runes on thy sword-hilt write; Some on the furrow, and some on the flat, And twice shalt thou call on Týr.²⁴ 7. Ale-runes learn, that with lies²⁵ the wife Of another betray not thy trust; On the horn thou shalt write, and the backs of thy hands, And Need²⁶ shalt mark on thy nails. Thou shalt bless the draught, and danger escape, And cast a leek²⁷ in the cup; (For so I know thou never shalt see Thy mead with evil mixed.)²⁸ 8. Birth-runes learn, if help thou wilt lend, The babe from the mother to bring; On thy palms shalt write them, and round thy joints, And ask the fates to aid. 9. Wave-runes learn, if well thou wouldst shelter The sail-steeds²⁹ out on the sea; On the stem shalt thou write, and the steering blade, And burn them into the oars; Though high be the breakers, and black the waves, Thou shalt safe the harbor seek. 10. Branch-runes³⁰ learn, if a healer wouldst be, And cure for wounds wouldst work; On the bark shalt thou write, and on trees that be With boughs to the eastward bent. 11. Speech-runes learn, that none may seek To answer harm with hate; Well he winds and weaves them all, And sets them side by side, At the judgment-place, when justice there The folk shall fairly win.³¹	5.[2] "Long was my slumber, asleep was I long, Long to the luckless is life: 'Tis Valfather's will that wake I could not, Nor rid me of runes of sleep." [P3] Then Sigurth asked that she teach him wisdom, if so it be that she had knowledge from all the worlds. <i>Sigrdrifa said:</i> 6. "Ale I bring thee, thou oak-of-battle,⁸⁰ With strength i-blent and brightest honor; 'Tis mixed with magic and mighty songs, With goodly spells, wish-speeding runes. 7. "Learn victory runes if thou victory wantest, And have them on thy sword's hilt— On thy sword's hilt some, on thy sword's guard some, And call twice upon Týr.⁸¹ 8. "Learn ale runes eke, lest other man's wife Betray thee who trusted in her:⁸² On thy beer horn scratch it, and the back of thy hand, And the Nauth rune⁸³ on thy nails. 9. "Thy beaker bless to banish fear, And cast a leek in thy cup:⁸⁴ Then know I that never thou needest fear That bale in thy beer there be. 10. "Learn help runes eke, if help thou wilt A woman to bring forth her babe:⁸⁵ On thy palms wear them and grasp her wrists, And ask the dísir's aid.⁸⁶ 11. "Learn sea runes eke if save thou wilt The sail-steeds⁸⁷ on the sea: On the bow scratch them, and on rudder blade,⁸⁸ And etch them with fire in the oars: Howe'er beetling the billows and black the deep, Yet comest thou safe from the sea. 12. "Limb runes learn thou, if a leech would'st be, And wishest wounds to heal: On the bark scratch them of bole in the woods⁸⁹ Whose boughs bend to the east. 13. "Speech runes learn thou, to spite no one,⁹⁰ Lest out of hate he harm thee: These wind thou, these weave thou, And gather them all together When men to moot are met at the Thing,⁹¹ And all Thing-men are there.
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13. <i>Hug</i>-(thought-) runes thou must know, If thou a wiser man wilt be than every other. Those interpreted, those graved, Those devised Hropt, From the fluid which had leaked From Heiddraupnir's head, And from Hoddronnir's horn. 14. On a rock he stood, with edged sword, A helm on his head he bore. Then spake Mim's head its first wise word, And true sayings uttered. 15. They are, it said, on the shield graven, which stands before the shining god, On Arvakr's ear, and on Alsvith's hoof, On the wheel which rolls under Rognir's car, On Sleipnir's teeth, and on the sledge's bands. 16. On the bear's paw, and on Bragi's tongue, On the wolf's claws, and the eagle's beak, On bloody wings, and on the bridge's end, On the releasing hand, and on healing's track. 17. On glass and on gold, on amulets of men, In wine and in wort, and in the welcome seat, On Gungnir's point, and on Grani's breast, On the Norm's nail, and the owl's neb. 18. All were erased that were inscribed, And mingled with the sacred mead, And sent on distant ways: They are with the Æsir, they are with the Alfar, Some with the wise Vanir, Some human beings have. 19. Those are <i>bok</i>-runes,⁷ those are <i>biarg</i>-runes, And all <i>ol</i>-(beer-) runes, And precious <i>megin</i>-(power-) runes, For those who can, without confusion or corruption, Turn them to his welfare. Use, if thou hast understood them, Until the powers perish.	12. Thought-runes learn, if all shall think Thou art keenest minded of men.³² * * * * * ³³13. Them Hropt³⁴ arranged, and them he wrote, And them in thought he made, Out of the draught³⁵ that down had dropped From the head of Heithdraupnir, And the horn of Hoddrofnir. 14.³⁶ On the mountain he stood with Brimir's³⁷ sword, On his head the helm he bore; Then first the head of Mim spoke forth, And words of truth it told. * * * * * ³⁸15. He bade write on the shield³⁹ before the shining goddess, On Arvak's ear, and on Alsvith's hoof,⁴⁰ On the wheel of the car of Hrungrnir's killer,⁴¹ On Sleipnir's teeth, and the straps of the sledge.⁴² 16. On the paws of the bear, and on Bragi's tongue,⁴³ On the wolf's claws bared, and the eagle's beak, On bloody wings, and bridge's end, On freeing hands and helping foot-prints. 17. On glass and on gold, and on goodly charms,⁴⁴ In wine and in beer, and on well-loved seats, On Gungnir's⁴⁵ point, and on Grani's⁴⁶ breast, On the nails of Norns, and the night-owl's beak. * * * * * ⁴⁷18. Shaved off⁴⁸ were the runes that of old were written, And mixed with the holy mead, And sent on ways so wide; So the gods had them, so the elves got them, And some for the Waness⁴⁹ so wise, And some for mortal men. 19. Beech-runes⁵⁰ are there, birth-runes are there, And all the runes of ale, And the magic runes of might; Who knows them rightly and reads them true, Has them himself to help; Ever they aid, Till the gods are gone.⁵¹	14. "Mind runes learn thou if among men thou wilt Be wiser than any wight: Them did guess, them did grave, Them did hit upon Hrópt.⁹² 15.⁹³ Made of the sap which seeped in drops Out of Heithdraupnir's head, Out of Hoddrofnir's horn.⁹⁴ 16. "On the brink stood he⁹⁵ with Brímir, the sword; On his head he had a helm: Then muttered Mímir's head Wisely first this word, And sooth said of this: 17. "Said on the shield graven⁹⁶ before the shining god which stands, On Árvakr's⁹⁷ ear, and on Alsvith's⁹⁸ hoof, / On the wheel which turns 'neath (Hrungrnir's bane's)⁹⁹ wain, On Sleipnir's¹⁰⁰ teeth, and on the sleigh's strap bands,¹⁰¹ 18. "On the paw of the bear and on Bragi's¹⁰² tongue, On the old wolf's claw and on the eagle's beak, On the bloody wings¹⁰³ and on the bridge's head, On the midwife's hand and on the healing spoor,¹⁰⁴ 19. "On glass and on gold and on good luck token,¹⁰⁵ In wine and in wort and on wonted seat, On Gungnir's¹⁰⁶ point and on Grani's¹⁰⁷ breast, On the norm-nail¹⁰⁸ eke and the night owl's beak. 20. "Off were scraped all which on were scratched,¹⁰⁹ And mixed with the holy mead, And sent about and abroad. The Æsir have them, the alfs have them, And some the wise Vanir have And some, mortal men. 21. "These beech runes be, and birth runes, too, And all ale runes, And mighty, magic runes: for whoe'er unspoilt, and unspilt, eke, For his help will have them: Gain he who grasps them, Till draws near the doom of the gods!
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20. Now thou shalt choose, since a choice is offered thee, Keen armed warrior! My speech, or silence: think over it in thy mind. All evils⁸ have their measure. Sigurd 21. I will not flee, though thou shouldst know me doomed. I am not born a craven. Thy friendly counsels all I will receive, As long as life is in me. Sigrdrifa 22. This I thee counsel first: That towards thy kin thou bear thee blameless. Take not hasty vengeance, although they raise up strife: That, it is said, benefits the dead. 23. This I thee counsel secondly: That no oath thou swear, if it be not true. Cruel bonds follow broken faith: Accursed is the faith-breaker. 24. This I thee counsel thirdly: That in the assembly thou contend not with a fool; For an unwise man oft utters words Worse than he knows of. 25. All is vain, if thou holdest silence; Then wilt thou seem a craven born, Or else truly accused. Doubtful is a servant's testimony, Unless a good one thou gettest. On the next day let his life go forth, And so men's lies reward. 26. This I counsel thee fourthly: If a wicked sorceress dwells by the way, To go on is better than there to lodge, Though night may overtake thee. 27. Of searching eyes the sons of men have need, When fiercely they have to fight: Oft pernicious women by the way-side sit, Who swords and valour deaden. 28. This I thee counsel fifthly: Although thou see fair women on the benches sitting, Let not their kindred's silver over thy sleep have power. To kiss thee entice no woman.	* * * * * Brynhild spake:⁵² ⁵³20. "Now shalt thou choose, for the choice is given, Thou tree⁵⁴ of the biting blade; Speech or silence, 'tis thine to say, Our evil is destined all." Sigurth spake: 21. "I shall not flee, though my fate be near, I was born not a coward to be; Thy loving word for mine will I win, As long as I shall live."⁵⁵ ⁵⁶ 22. Then first I rede thee, that free of guilt Toward kinsmen ever thou art; No vengeance have, though they work thee harm, Reward after death thou shalt win. 23. Then second I rede thee, to swear no oath If true thou knowest it not; Bitter the fate of the breaker of troth, And poor is the wolf of his word.⁵⁷ 24. Then third I rede thee, that thou at the Thing Shalt fight not in words with fools; For the man unwise a worser word Than he thinks doth utter oft. 25. Ill it is if silent thou art, A coward born men call thee, And truth mayhap they tell; Seldom safe is fame, Unless wide renown be won; On the day thereafter send him to death, Let him pay the price of his lies.⁵⁸ 26. Then fourth I rede thee, if thou shalt find A wily witch on thy road, It is better to go than her guest to be, Though night enfold thee fast. 27.⁵⁹ Eyes that see need the sons of men Who fight in battle fierce; Oft witches evil sit by the way, Who blade and courage blunt. 28. Then fifth I rede thee, though maidens fair Thou seest on benches sitting, Let the silver of kinship⁶⁰ not rob thee of sleep, And the kissing of women beware.	22.¹¹⁰ "Now shalt thou choose, since choice thou hast, Hero 'neath shining helm, To say or naught say: with thyself rests it! Meted out is all evil."¹¹¹ <i>(Sigurth said:)</i> 23. "Flee I shall not though fey I know me: Since a babe my breast knew no fear. Thy loving counsel I life would have As long as my life doth last."¹¹² <i>(Sigrdrifa said:)</i> 24. "This counsel I first: of kinsmen of thine At no time fall thou foul: Curb thy revenge, though cause there be: 'Twill boot thy dying day."¹¹³ 25. "This other I counsel, that oath thou swear not But thou tell the truth: For baleful doom follows breach of truce; Ill fares the breaker of oaths."¹¹⁴ 26. "This third I counsel, that at Thing thou never Bandy words with witless wight; For unwise man full often says Worser words than he knows. 27. "'Tis well nowise if naught thou say'st: A craven thou't be called; [or taunted that true the charge. Fickle is homemade fame, But good it be gotten.]"¹¹⁵ Make away with him when he waiteth him not, And reward thus the wicked lie."¹¹⁶ 28. "That fourth I counsel, if foul witch live By the way thou wishest to fare: To go on is better than be her guest, Though that the night be near. 29. "Foresight is needful to the sons of men, Where'er in the fray they fight; Oft harmful hags do haunt the way, Who dull both weapon and wit. 30. "That counsel I fifth: though fair women, And brow-white, sit on bench: Let the silver-dight one steal thy sleep, Nor lure thou women to love!
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29. This I thee counsel sixthly: Although among men pass offensive tipsy talk, Never while drunken quarrel with men of war: Wine steals the wits of many. 30. Brawls and drink to many men Have been a heartfelt sorrow; To some their death, to some calamity: Many are the griefs of men! 31. This I thee counsel seventhly: If thou hast disputes with a daring man, Better it is for men to fight Than to be burnt within their dwelling. 32. This I thee counsel eighthly: That thou guard thee against evil, and eschew deceit. Entice no maiden, nor wife of man, Nor to wantonness incite. 33. This I thee counsel ninthly: that thou corpses bury, Wherever on the earth thou findest them, Whether from sickness they have died, or from the sea, Or are from weapons dead. 34. Let a mound be raised for those departed; Let their hands and head be washed, Combed, and wiped dry, ere in the coffin they are laid: And pray for their happy sleep. 35. This I thee counsel tenthly: That thou never trust a foe's kinsman's promises, Whose brother thou hast slain, or sire laid low. There is a wolf in a young son, Though he with gold be gladdened. 36. Strifes and fierce enmities think not to be lulled, No more than deadly injury. Wisdom and fame in arms a prince not easily acquires, Who shall of men be foremost. 37. This I counsel thee eleventhly: That thou at evil look, what course it may take. A long life, it seems to me the prince may [not] enjoy;— Fierce disputes will arise. Sigurd said: "A wiser mortal exists not, and I swear that I will possess thee, for thou art after my heart." She answered: "Thee I will have before all others, though I have to choose among all men." And this they confirmed with oaths to each other.	29. Then sixth I rede thee, if men shall wrangle, /⁶¹ And ale-talk rise to wrath, No words with a drunken warrior have, For wine steals many men's wits. 30.⁶² Brawls and ale full oft have been An ill to many a man, Death for some, and sorrow for some; Full many the woes of men. 31. Then seventh I rede thee, if battle thou seekest With a foe that is full of might; It is better to fight than to burn alive In the hall of the hero rich.⁶³ 32. Then eighth I rede thee, that evil thou shun, And beware of lying words; Take not a maid, nor the wife of a man, Nor lure them on to lust. 33. Then ninth I rede thee: burial render If thou findest a fallen corpse, Of sickness dead, or dead in the sea, Or dead of weapons' wounds. 34.⁶⁴ A bath shalt thou give them who corpses be, And hands and head shalt wash; Wipe them and comb, ere they go in the coffin, And pray that they sleep in peace. 35. Then tenth I rede thee, that never thou trust The word of the race of wolves,⁶⁵ (If his brother thou broughtest to death, Or his father thou didst fell;)⁶⁶ Often a wolf in a son there is, Though gold he gladly takes. 36.⁶⁷ Battle and hate and harm, methinks, Full seldom fall asleep; Wits and weapons the warrior needs If boldest of men he would be. 37. Then eleventh I rede thee, that wrath thou shun, And treachery false with thy friends; Not long the leader's life shall be, For great are the foes he faces.⁶⁸	31. "That counsel I sixth: though swaggering speech And unkind be made o'er the cups:¹¹⁷ With drunken warriors no words thou bandy, For wine steals many a one's wits. 32. "Quarrels and ale have often brought Sorrow to sons of men— Foul death to some, ill fate to others: Much woe is wrought in the world. 33. "That counsel I seventh: if for cause thou fight Against stouthearted heroes: 'Tis better to battle than be burned alive Within his own house and home.¹¹⁸ 34. "That counsel I eighth, to keep thee from evil, Nor dally with dastardly deeds; No maiden mar thou, nor married woman Lure thou to love with thee. 35. "That counsel I ninth, that corpses thou bury,¹¹⁹ Wheresoe'er on earth thou find them— Whether sickness slew them, or in the sea they drowned, Or whether they fell in fight. 36. ["A bath shalt make for the dead man's body, And wash both his hands and head; Dry and comb him, ere in coffin laid, And bid him sleep sweetly.]"¹²⁰ 37. "That counsel I tenth, that thou trust never Oath of an outlaw's son; Whether art his brother's bane, or felled his father: A wolf oft sleeps in his son, though young, And glad of the gold though he be.¹²¹ 38. "Seldom sleepeth the sense of wrong Nor, either, hate and heartache. Both his wits and weapons a warrior needs Who would fain be foremost among folk. 39. "That counsel I eleventh: to keep thee from evil, Whence'er it may threaten thee:¹²² Not long the lord's life, I ween me. Have fateful feuds arisen."¹²³
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¹ The separate title—itself based on a misconception (see *Grípisspá*, initial note)—is found in the paper manuscripts and is adopted by most editors for the sake of convenience.

² [Outline and numbering given in brackets inserted by this compiler - RSJ]

³ The original words, hrafns hrælundir, *the raven's corpse-trees*. So Grimm understands the line; because that bird hops about upon the armour as upon a tree.

⁴ The superstition of the *healing hand* is not yet extinct In Iceland. Dr. Maurer relates a story of a man in Reykjavlk to whom it would seem to have been communicated by an elfin, in a dream.

⁵ Literally *apple-tree*.

⁶ The name of a rune.

⁷ Literally beech-(*book*-) runes, from being used for book writing or graving on thin leaves of beech (*bok*), whence our *book*. Bok also signifies *acupictile*, vel *acupictum* (*velum, auloeum*).

⁸ An allusion to Sigurd's unhappy end.

⁹ The introductory prose follows without break the prose concluding the *Fafnismol*, the point of division being arbitrary and not agreed upon by all editors.

¹⁰ Hindarfjöll: cf. *Fafnismol*, 42 and note.

¹¹ Franks: this does not necessarily mean that Sigurth was on his way to the Gjukungs' home, for Sigmund had a kingdom in the land of the Franks (cf. *Fra Dautha Sinfjotla*).

¹² Shields: the annotator probably drew the notion of the shield-tower from the reference in *Helreith Brynhildar*, 9. The flame-girt tower was not uncommon; cf. Mengloth's hall in *Svipdagsmol*.

¹³ This stanza, and the two lines included in the prose after stanza 4, and possibly stanza 5 as well, evidently come from a different poem from stanzas 2-4. Lines 3-4 in the original are obscure, though the general meaning is clear.

¹⁴ In the manuscript stanza 4 stands before this prose note and stanzas 2-3. The best arrangement of the stanzas seems to be the one here given, following Mullenhoff's suggestion, but the prose note is out of place anywhere.

The first sentence of it ought to follow stanza 4 and immediately precede the next prose note; the second sentence ought to precede stanza 5.

¹⁵ Sons of day: the spirits of light.

¹⁶ The daughter of night (Not), according to Snorri, was Jorth (Earth).

¹⁷ Sigdrifa: on the error whereby this epithet, "victory-bringer," became a proper name cf. *Fafnismol*, 44 and note.

¹⁸ Hjalmgunnar: in *Helreith Brynhildar* (stanza 8) he is called a king of the Goths, which means little; of him and his adversary, Agnar, we know nothing beyond what is told here.

¹⁹ The two lines quoted apparently come from the same poem as stanza 1; the two first lines of the stanza have been reconstructed from the prose thus: "Hjalmgunnar was one, | the hoary king, / And triumph to him | had Heerfather promised." A few editions insert in this prose passage stanzas 7-10 of *Helreith Brynhildar*, which may or may not have belonged originally to this poem.

²⁰ This stanza is perhaps, but by no means surely, from the same poem as stanza 1.

²¹ Tree of battle: warrior.

²² Runes: the earliest runes were not letters, but simply signs supposed to possess magic power; out of them developed the "runic alphabet."

²³ Stanzas 6-12 give a list of runes which probably had no original connection with the Brynhild-Sigurth story.

²⁴ Tyr: the sword-god (cf. *Hymiskvitha*, 4 and note); "tyr" is also the name of a rune which became "T."

²⁵ Lies, etc.: a guest on his arrival received a draught of ale from the hands of his host's wife, and it was to prevent this draught from bewitching him that the runes were recommended.

²⁶ Need: the word "nauth," meaning "need," is also the name of the rune which became "N."

²⁷ Leek: leeks were long supposed to have the power of counteracting poison or witchcraft.

²⁸ *Regius* gives only lines 1-6; lines 7-8 are added from *Volsungasaga*.

²⁹ Sail-steeds: ships.

³⁰ Branch-runes: runes cut in the bark of trees. Such runes were believed to transfer sickness from the invalid to the tree. Some editors, however, have changed "limrunar" ("branch runes") to "lifrunar" ("life-runes").

³¹ Lines 3-6 look like an accidental addition, replacing two lines now lost. They mean, apparently, that the man who interweaves his speech with "speech-runes" when he pleads his case at the "Thing," or popular tribunal, will not unduly enrage his adversary in the argument of the case.

³² Here the list of runes breaks off, though the manuscript indicates no gap, and three short passages of a different type, though all dealing with runes, follow.

³³ Stanzas 13-14 appear to have come from a passage regarding Othin's getting of the runes similar to *Hovamol*, 139-146. Editors have tried various combinations of the lines in stanzas 12-14.

³⁴ Hropt: Othin; cf. *Voluspo*, 62.

³⁵ The draught, etc.: apparently the reference is to the head of Mim, from which Othin derived his wisdom in magic (cf. *Voluspo*, 47 and note); Heithdraupnir ("Light-Dropper") and Hoddrofnir ("Treasure-Opener") seem to be names for Mim.

³⁶ This stanza is clearly in bad shape; perhaps, as the manuscript indicates, a new stanza, of which most has been lost, should begin with line 3.

³⁷ Brimir: a giant (cf. *Voluspo*, 9 and 37); why Othin should have his sword is unknown.

³⁸ Stanzas 15-17 constitute a wholly distinct rune-chant. Line 1 is unusually long in the original, as here.

³⁹ Shield: the shield Svalin ("Cooling") that stands in front of the sun; cf. *Grimnismol*, 38.

⁴⁰ Arvak ("Early Waker") and Alsvith ("All Swift"): the horses that draw the sun's car; cf. *Grimnismol*, 37.

⁴¹ Hrungrnir: the slayer of the giant Hrungrnir was Thor (cf. *Harbarthsljoth*, 14 and note), but the line is in bad shape; the name may not be Hrungrnir, and "killer" is a conjectural addition.

⁴² Sleipnir: Othin's eight-legged horse; cf. *Grimnismol*, 44 and note. Sledge: perhaps the one mentioned in *Grimnismol*, 49.

⁴³ Bragi: the god of poetry; cf. *Grimnismol*, 44 and note.

⁴⁴ Charms: the wearing of amulets was very common.

⁴⁵ Gungnir: Othin's spear, made by the dwarfs, which he occasionally lent to heroes to whom he granted victory.

⁴⁶ Grani: Sigurth's horse; the *Volsungasaga* has "giantesses'."

⁴⁷ Stanzas 18-19, which editors have freely rearranged, apparently come from another source than any of the rest.

⁴⁸ Shaved off: the runes were shaved off by Othin from the wood on which they were carved, and the shavings bearing them were put into the magic mead.

⁴⁹ Wanes [i.e. Vanir]: cf. *Voluspo*, 21, note.

⁵⁰ Beech-runes: runes carved on beech trees.

⁵¹ Lines 3, 6, and 7 look like spurious additions, but the whole stanza is chaotic.

⁵² The manuscript does not indicate the speaker of either this or the following stanza; the *Volsungasaga* names Sigurth before stanza 21

⁵³ Stanzas 20-21 are all that remains of the dialogue between Brynhild and Sigurth from the poem to which stanzas 2-4 belong; cf. Introductory Note. In the intervening lost stanzas Brynhild has evidently warned Sigurth of the perils that will follow if he swears loyalty to her; hence the choice to which she here refers.

⁵⁴ Tree, etc.: warrior.

⁵⁵ It is quite possible that the original poem concluded with two stanzas after this, paraphrased thus in the *Volsungasaga*: "Sigurth said: 'Nowhere is to be found any one wiser than thou, and this I swear, that I shall have thee for mine, and that thou art after my heart's desire.' She answered: 'I would rather have thee though I might choose among all men.' And this they bound between them with oaths." Stanzas 22-37, which the *Volsungasaga* paraphrases, may have been introduced at a relatively early time, but can hardly have formed part of the original poem.

⁵⁶ With this stanza begins the list of numbered counsels, closely resembling the *Loddfafnismol* (*Hovamol*, 111-138), here attributed to Brynhild. That the section originally had anything to do with Brynhild is more than improbable.

⁵⁷ Wolf of his word: oath-destroyer, oath-breaker.

⁵⁸ This chaotic and obscure jumble of lines has been unsuccessfully "improved" by various editors. It is clearly an interpolation, meaning, in substance: "It is dangerous to keep silent too long, as men may think you a coward; but if any one taunts you falsely because of your silence, do not argue with him, but the next morning kill him as proof that he is a liar."

⁵⁹ Probably another interpolation.

⁶⁰ Silver of kinship: the passage is doubtful, but apparently it means the "marriage-price" for which a bride was "bought."

⁶¹ Line 1 comes at the end of the thirty-second leaf of *Regius*, and whatever further was contained in that manuscript has vanished with the lost eight-leaf folio (cf. Introductory Note). The rest of stanza 29, and stanzas 30-37, are added from later paper manuscripts, which were undoubtedly copied from an old parchment, though probably not from the complete *Regius*. The *Volsungasaga* paraphrases these additional stanzas.

⁶² Probably an interpolation.

⁶³ The meaning is that it is better to go forth to battle than to stay at home and be burned to death. Many a Norse warrior met his death in this latter way; the burning of the house in the *Njalssaga* is the most famous instance.

⁶⁴ Probably an interpolation.

⁶⁵ Race of wolves: family of a slain foe.

⁶⁶ Lines 3-4 are probably interpolated.

⁶⁷ Probably an interpolation.

⁶⁸ Lines 3-4 may well have come from the old Sigurth-Brynhild poem, like stanzas 2-4 and 20-21, being inserted here, where they do not fit particularly well, in place of the two lines with which the eleventh counsel originally ended. Perhaps they formed part of the stanza of warning which evidently preceded Brynhild's speech in stanza 20. In the *Volsungasaga* they are paraphrased at the end of Brynhild's long speech of advice (stanzas 20-37), and are immediately followed by the prose passage given in the note on stanza 21. It seems likely, therefore, that the paper manuscripts have preserved all of the so-called *Sigrdrifumol* which was contained in the lost section of *Regius*, with the possible exception of these two concluding stanzas, and these may very well have been given only in the form of a prose note, though it is practically certain that at one time they existed in verse form.

⁶⁹ The realm of the Gjúkungs, conceived as lying somewhere in Southern Germany.

⁷⁰ Of sleep imposed on her.

⁷¹ The passage is doubtful.

⁷² The "day's sons" and the "daughter of night" are probably symbolic deities of light and darkness. The order of the Prose and of stanzas 2-5 in the original is changed here, following Müllenhoff and Bugge, for the sake of achieving a reasonable connection.

⁷³ In the sense of "success," "victory."

⁷⁴ See St.10.

⁷⁵ "Helm-Gunnar." See *Helrið Brynhildar*, Sts.8ff.

⁷⁶ Óthin. See *Völuspa*, St.1.

⁷⁷ Suggested by Bugge, instead of the Prose to the same effect.

⁷⁸ A thorn on which "sleep runes" are scratched (St.5). Compare with the spindle in the story of *Dornröschen* (Sleeping Beauty).

⁷⁹ Literally, "to strengthen his memory." Compare with *Hyndluljóð*, St.29. Supplied here following *Völsunga saga*, Ch.20.

⁸⁰ Kenning for "warrior."

⁸¹ The god of war (see *Hymiskviða*, St.4 and note). His name is designated by the ↑ rune.

⁸² As did Grímhild (see *Gripisspá*, St.31ff) and borghild (see *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*).

⁸³ *Nauth*, "need," is the name of the rune (written þ) for "n."

⁸⁴ To counteract possible poison or magic.

⁸⁵ A kingly accomplishment, as in later times was the laying on of hands, "the royal touch."

⁸⁶ The *disir* are female guardian spirits.

⁸⁷ Kenning for "ship."

⁸⁸ The rudder on the dragon-ship consisted of a broad oar blade on the right hand in the stern; whence our term "starboard."

⁸⁹ When this is done, the wound is transferred to the tree: sympathetic magic.

⁹⁰ By some unpropitious remark.

⁹¹ The popular assembly.

⁹² Óthin. On this and the following stanzas see the Translator's Introduction to this lay.

⁹³ No lacuna is indicated in the original text.

⁹⁴ Possibly, epithets of Mímir, see *Völuspa*, Sts.27, 38 and note thereon.

⁹⁵ Óthin.

⁹⁶ In runes. The stanza hardly contains Mímir's prophetic words.

⁹⁷ The sun. See *Grímnismál*, St.39.

⁹⁸ The sun-horses. See *Grímnismál*, St.38.

⁹⁹ Following Bugge's and Jónsson's emendation: the giant Hrungr's slayer is Þór.

¹⁰⁰ Óthin's steed. See *Grímnismál*, St.45.

¹⁰¹ The withy bands by which the sleigh is fastened on the runners. Very likely, the sleigh mentioned in *Grímnismál*, St.50, is alluded to here.

¹⁰² The god of poetry.

¹⁰³ See *Reginsmál*, St.26 and note.

¹⁰⁴ Of feet running to aid?

¹⁰⁵ That is, on amulets (consisting mostly of bracteates).

¹⁰⁶ Óthin's spear.

¹⁰⁷ Sigurth's steed.

¹⁰⁸ Perhaps the name of one of the fingernails.

¹⁰⁹ The runes were scraped from the objects on which they had been graven and then mixed with the mead—here with the mead of poetry, which was shared by Óthin with the beings mentioned.

¹¹⁰ These words are addressed Sigurth, urging him to decide whether he will bind her to him forever.

¹¹¹ That is, all is foreordained.

¹¹² Sigurth's reply: he will not flee the early death which she has, in stanzas probably lost, foretold would result from their union (see St.39). *Völsunga saga*, Ch.21, has kept the gist of at least two other stanzas: "'Wiser woman liveth not in the world than thou art...and this swear I, that I shall wed thee, for thou art after my wish.' She answered: 'Thee would I have though I had choice among all men.' And that pledged they each other with oaths." These stanzas no doubt formed the conclusion of the original poem. Sigurth's words seem to have suggested the later addition of the remaining gnomic stanzas.

¹¹³ Conjectural.

¹¹⁴ See *Reginsmál*, St.4 and note.

¹¹⁵ The bracketed lines seem a later addition.

¹¹⁶ Accepting Gering's emendation.

¹¹⁷ Here, the text of *Codex Regius* breaks off. The remainder of the lay is supplied after the paper manuscripts. See the discussion of "The Great Lacuna."

¹¹⁸ Which was frequently resorted to in revenge.

¹¹⁹ Literally, "render the last services to the dead;" which in heathen times consisted in closing the nostrils, eyes, and mouth of the departed.

¹²⁰ All this according to Christian custom and sentiment: the stanza is interpolated.

¹²¹ He may ponder revenge even though having consented to accept "weregild" for the slailn.

¹²² Conjectural.

¹²³ A dark hint of Sigurth's early death.