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THE POETIC EDDA

Fáfnismál

The Lay of Fafnir

Old Norse · English - H. A. Bellows (1923)

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Urged on by the smith Regin, the young hero Sigurth slays the dragon Fafnir, who guards the cursed Nibelung hoard and the ring Andvaranaut on the Gnita heath. Sigurth digs a trench across the dragon's path and thrusts the sword Gram upward into its heart. As Fafnir dies, the two trade wisdom about the Norns, the gods, and the last battlefield Oskopnir, and the dragon warns again and again of the gold's curse: the red rings will be Sigurth's bane. At Regin's bidding Sigurth roasts the dragon's heart; when he burns his finger on the foaming blood and licks it, he suddenly understands the speech of birds. The nut-hatches in the thicket warn him of Regin's treachery, urging him to kill the smith and take the hoard alone — and they point him toward the flame-girt hall where a sleeping valkyrie lies. Sigurth strikes off Regin's head, eats the heart, drinks the blood of both brothers, and rides to Fafnir's lair to claim the gold, the fear-helm, and the sword Hrotti. Sources: Old Norse after the Codex Regius (ed. Guðni Jónsson), English after Henry Adams Bellows (1923) — both public domain.

Old Norse	English – H. A. Bellows (1923)
1 <i>Sveinn ok sveinn, hverjum ertu svein of borinn? Hverra ertu manna mögr, er þú á Fáfni rautt þinn inn frána mæki? Stöndumk til hjarta hjörr.</i>	Youth, oh, youth! of whom then, youth, art thou born? Say whose son thou art, Who in Fafnir's blood thy bright blade reddened, And struck thy sword to my heart.
2 <i>Göfugt dýr ek heiti, en ek gengit hefk inn móðurlausi mögr, föður ek ákk-a sem fira synir; æ geng ek einn saman.</i>	The Noble Hart my name, and I go A motherless man abroad; Father I had not, as others have, And lonely ever I live.
3 <i>Veiztu, ef föður né átt-at sem fira synir, af hverju vastu undri alinn?</i>	If father thou hadst not, as others have, By what wonder wast thou born? (Though thy name on the day of my death thou hidest, Thou knowest now thou dost lie.)
4 <i>Ætterni mitt kveð ek þér ókunnigt vera ok mik sjalfan it sama; Sigurðr ek heiti, Sigmundr hét minn faðir, er hefk þik vápnum vegit.</i>	My race, methinks, is unknown to thee, And so am I myself; Sigurth my name, and Sigmund's son, Who smote thee thus with the sword.
5 <i>Hverr þik hvatti? Hví hvetjask lézt mínu fjörvi at fara? Inn fráneygi sveinn, þú áttir föður bitran; óbornum skjór á skeið.</i>	Who drove thee on? why wert thou driven My life to make me lose? A father brave had the bright-eyed youth, For bold in boyhood thou art.

- 6 *Hugr mik hvatti,
hendr mér fulltýðu
ok minn inn hvassi hjörr;
fár er hvatr,
er hröðask tekr,
ef í barnæsku er blauðr.*
- My heart did drive me, my hand fulfilled,
And my shining sword so sharp;
Few are keen when old age comes,
Who timid in boyhood be.
- 7 *Veit ek, ef þú vaxa næðir
fyr þinna vina brjósti,
sæi maðr þik vreiðan vega;
nú ertu haftr
ok hernuminn;
æ kveða bandingja bifask.*
- If thou mightest grow thy friends among,
One might see thee fiercely fight;
But bound thou art, and in battle taken,
And to fear are prisoners prone.
- 8 *Því bregðr þú mér, Fáfnir,
at til fjarri séak
mínum feðrmunum;
eigi em ek haftr,
þótt ek væra hernumi;
þú fannt, at ek laus lífi.*
- Thou blamest me, Fafnir, that I see from afar
The wealth that my father's was;
Not bound am I, though in battle taken,
Thou hast found that free I live.
- 9 *Heiftyrði ein
telr þú þér í hvívetna,
en ek þér satt eitt segik:
It gjalla gull
ok it glóðrauða fé,
þér verða þeir baugar at bana.*
- In all I say dost thou hatred see,
Yet truth alone do I tell;
The sounding gold, the glow-red wealth,
And the rings thy bane shall be.
- 10 *Féi ráða
vill fyrða hverr
æ til ins eina dags;
því at einu sinni
skal alda hverr
fara til heljar heðan.*
- Some one the hoard shall ever hold,
Till the destined day shall come;
For a time there is when every man
Shall journey hence to hell.
- 11 *Norna dóm
þú munt fyr nesjum hafa
ok ósvinns apa;
í vatni þú drukknar,
ef í vindi rær;
allt er feigs forað.*
- The fate of the Norns before the headland
Thou findest, and doom of a fool;
In the water shalt drown if thou row 'gainst the
wind,
All danger is near to death.
- 12 *Segðu mér, Fáfnir,
alls þik fróðan kveða
ok vel margt vita,
hverjar ro þær nornir,
er nauðgönglar ro
ok kjósa mæðr frá mögum.*
- Tell me then, Fafnir, for wise thou art famed,
And much thou knowest now:
Who are the Norns who are helpful in need,
And the babe from the mother bring?

- 13** *Sundrbornar mjök
segi ek nornir vera,
eigu-t þær ætt saman;
sumar eru áskunngar,
sumar alfkunngar,
sumar dætr Dvalins.*
- Of many births the Norns must be,
Nor one in race they were;
Some to gods, others to elves are kin,
And Dvalin's daughters some.
- 14** *Segðu mér þat, Fáfnir,
alls þik fróðan kveða
ok vel margt vita,
hvé sá holmr heitir,
er blanda hjörlegi
Surtr ok æsir saman.*
- Tell me then, Fafnir, for wise thou art famed,
And much thou knowest now:
How call they the isle where all the gods
And Surt shall sword-sweat mingle?
- 15** *Óskópnir hann heitir,
en þar öll skulu
geirum leika goð;
Bilröst brotnar,
er þeir á brú fara,
ok svima í móðu marir.*
- Oskopnir is it, where all the gods
Shall seek the play of swords;
Bilrost breaks when they cross the bridge,
And the steeds shall swim in the flood.
- 16** *Ægishjalm
bar ek of alda sonum,
meðan ek of menjum lák;
einn rammari
hugðumk öllum vera,
fannk-a ek svá marga mögu.*
- The fear-helm I wore to afright mankind,
While guarding my gold I lay;
Mightier seemed I than any man,
For a fiercer never I found.
- 17** *Ægishjalmr
bergr einungi,
hvar skulu vreiðir vega;
þá þat finnr,
er með fleirum kemr,
at engi er einna hvatastr.*
- The fear-helm surely no man shields
When he faces a valiant foe;
Oft one finds, when the foe he meets,
That he is not the bravest of all.
- 18** *Eitri ek fnæsta,
er ek á arfi lá
miklum míns föður.*
- Venom I breathed when bright I lay
By the hoard my father had;
(There was none so mighty as dared to meet me,
And weapons nor wiles I feared.)
- 19** *Inn fráni ormr,
þú gerðir fræs mikla
ok galzt harðan hug;
heift at meiri
verðr hölða sonum,
at þann hjalm hafi.*
- Glittering worm, thy hissing was great,
And hard didst show thy heart;
But hatred more have the sons of men
For him who owns the helm.

- 20 *Ræð ek þér nú, Sigurðr,
en þú ráð nemir,
ok ríð heim heðan;
it gjalla gull
ok it glóðrauða fé,
þér verða þeir baugar at bana.*
- I counsel thee, Sigurth, heed my speech,
And ride thou homeward hence,
The sounding gold, the glow-red wealth,
And the rings thy bane shall be.
- 21 *Ráð er þér ráðit,
en ek ríða mun
til þess gulls, er í lyngvi liggr,
en þú, Fáfnir,
ligg í fjörbrotum,
þar er þik hel hafi.*
- Thy counsel is given, but go I shall
To the gold in the heather hidden;
And, Fafnir, thou with death dost fight,
Lying where Hel shall have thee.
- 22 *Reginn mik réð,
hann þik ráða mun,
hann mun okkr verða báðum at bana;
fjör sitt láta,
hygg ek, at Fáfnir myni;
þitt varð nú meira megin.*
- Regin betrayed me, and thee will betray,
Us both to death will he bring;
His life, methinks, must Fafnir lose,
For the mightier man wast thou.
- 23 *Heill þú nú, Sigurðr,
nú hefir þú sigr vegit
ok Fáfnir of farit;
manna þeira,
er mold troða,
þik kveð ek óblauðastan alinn.*
- Hail to thee, Sigurth! Thou victory hast,
And Fafnir in fight hast slain;
Of all the men who tread the earth,
Most fearless art thou, methinks.
- 24 *Þat er óvíst at vita,
þá er komum allir saman,
sigtíva synir,
hverr óblauðastr er alinn;
margr er sá hvatr,
er hjör né rýðr
annars brjóstum í.*
- Unknown it is, when all are together,
(The sons of the glorious gods,)
Who bravest born shall seem;
Some are valiant who redden no sword
In the blood of a foeman's breast.
- 25 *Glaðr ertu nú, Sigurðr,
ok gagní feginn,
er þú þerrir Gram á grasi;
bróður minn
hefr þú benjaðan,
ok vald ek þó sjalfr sumu.*
- Glad art thou, Sigurth, of battle gained,
As Gram with grass thou cleanseest;
My brother fierce in fight hast slain,
And somewhat I did myself.
- 26 *Þú því rétt,
er ek ríða skyldak
hélug fjöll hinig;
féi ok fjörvi
réði sá inn fráni ormr,
nema þú frýðir mér hvats hugar.*
- Thy rede it was that I should ride
Hither o'er mountains high;
The glittering worm would have wealth and life
If thou hadst not mocked at my might.

27 *Sittu nú, Sigurðr,
en ek mun sofa ganga,
ok halt Fáfnis hjarta við funa;
eisköld ek vil
etin láta
eftir þenna dreyra drykk.*

Sit now, Sigurth, for sleep will I,
Hold Fafnir's heart to the fire;
For all his heart shall eaten be,
Since deep of blood I have drunk.

28 *Fjarri þú gekkt,
meðan ek á Fáfni rauðk
minn inn hvassa hjör;
aflí mínu
atta ek við orms megin,
meðan þú í lyngvi látt.*

Afar didst thou go while Fafnir reddened
With his blood my blade so keen;
With the might of the dragon my strength I
matched,
While thou in the heather didst hide.

29 *Lengi liggja
létir þú lyngvi í
þann inn aldna jötun,
ef þú sverðs né nytir,
þess er ek sjalfr gerða,
ok þíns ins hvassa hjörs.*

Longer wouldst thou in the heather have let
Yon hoary giant hide,
Had the weapon availed not that once I forged,
The keen-edged blade thou didst bear.

30 *Hugr er betri
en sé hjörs megin,
hvars vreiðir skulu vega,
því at hvatan mann
ek sé harðliga vega
með slævu sverði sigr.*

Better is heart than a mighty blade
For him who shall fiercely fight;
The brave man well shall fight and win,
Though dull his blade may be.

31 *Hvötum er betra
en sé óhvötum
í hildileik hafask;
glöðum er betra
en sé glúpnanda,
hvat sem at hendi kemr.*

Brave men better than cowards be,
When the clash of battle comes;
And better the glad than the gloomy man
Shall face what before him lies.

32 *Þar sitr Sigurðr
sveita stokkinn,
Fáfnis hjarta
við funa steikir;
spakr þætti mér
spillir bauga,
ef hann fjörsega
fránan æti.*

There sits Sigurth, sprinkled with blood,
And Fafnir's heart with fire he cooks;
Wise were the breaker of rings, I ween,
To eat the life-muscles all so bright.

- 33 *Þar liggr Reginn,
ræðr um við sik,
vill tæla mög,
þann er trúir hánum,
berr af reiði
röng orð saman,
vill bölvasmiðr
bróður hefna.*
- There Regin lies, and plans he lays
The youth to betray who trusts him well;
Lying words with wiles will he speak,
Till his brother the maker of mischief avenges.
- 34 *Höfði skemmra
láti hann inn hára þul
fara til heljar heðan;
öllu gulli
þá kná hann einn ráða,
fjölð því er und Fáfni lá.*
- Less by a head let the chatterer hoary
Go from here to hell;
Then all of the wealth he alone can wield,
The gold that Fafnir guarded.
- 35 *Horskr þætti mér,
ef hafa kynni
ástráð mikit
yðvar systra,
hygði hann of sik
ok hugin gleddi;
þar er mér ulfs ván,
er ek eyru sék.*
- Wise would he seem if so he would heed
The counsel good we sisters give;
Thought he would give, and the ravens gladden,
There is ever a wolf where his ears I spy.
- 36 *Er-at svá horskr
hildimeíðr
sem ek hers jaðar
hyggja myndak,
ef hann bróður lætr
á brot komask,
en hann öðrum hefir
aldrs of synjat.*
- Less wise must be the tree of battle
Than to me would seem the leader of men,
If forth he lets one brother fare,
When he of the other the slayer is.
- 37 *Mjök er ósviðr,
ef hann enn sparir
fjánda inn folkskáa,
þar er Reginn liggr,
er hann ráðinn hefr,
kann-at hann við slíku at séa.*
- Most foolish he seems if he shall spare
His foe, the bane of the folk,
There Regin lies, who hath wronged him so,
Yet falsehood knows he not.
- 38 *Höfði skemmra láti hann
þann inn hrímkalda jötun
ok af baugum búa;
þá mun hann fjár þess,
er Fáfni réð,
einvaldi vera.*
- Let the head from the frost-cold giant be hewed,
And let him of rings be robbed;
Then all the wealth which Fafnir's was
Shall belong to thee alone.

39 Verða-t svá rík sköp,
at Reginn skyli
mitt banorð bera;
því at þeir báðir bræðr
skulu bráðliga
fara til heljar heðan.

Not so rich a fate shall Regin have
As the tale of my death to tell;
For soon the brothers both shall die,
And hence to hell shall go.

40 Bitt þú, Sigurðr,
bauga rauða;
er-a konungligt
kvíða mörgu.
Mey veit ek eina
miklu fegrsta,
gulli gædda,
ef þú geta mættir.

Bind, Sigurth, the golden rings together,
Not kingly is it aught to fear;
I know a maid, there is none so fair,
Rich in gold, if thou mightest get her.

41 Liggja til Gjúka
grænar brautir,
fram vísa sköp
folklíðöndum;
þar hefir dýrr konungr
dóttur alna;
þá muntu, Sigurðr,
mundi kaupa.

Green the paths that to Gjuki lead,
And his fate the way to the wanderer shows;
The doughty king a daughter has,
That thou as a bride mayst, Sigurth, buy.

42 Salr er á háu
Hindarfjalli,
allr er hann útan
eldi sveipinn,
þann hafa horskir
halir of görvan
ór ódökkum
Ógnar ljóma.

A hall stands high on Hindarfjoll,
All with flame is it ringed without;
Warriors wise did make it once
Out of the flaming light of the flood.

43 Veit ek á fjalli
folkviðr sofa
ok leikr yfir
lindar váði;
Yggr stakk þorni,
aðra felldi
hör-Gefn hali
en hafa vildi.

On the mountain sleeps a battle-maid,
And about her plays the bane of the wood;
Ygg with the thorn hath smitten her thus,
For she felled the fighter he fain would save.

44 Knáttu, mögr, séa
mey und hjalmi,
þá er frá vígi
Vingskorni reið;
má-at Sigdrífur
svefni bregða
skjöldunga niðr
fyr sköpum norna.

There mayst thou behold the maiden helmed,
Who forth on Vingskornir rode from the fight;
The victory-bringer her sleep shall break not,
Thou heroes' son, so the Norns have set.

