

*Völuspá: The prophecy of the seeress*

1. A hearing I ask of all holy offspring,  
the higher and lower of Heimdall's brood.  
Do you want me, Corpse-father, to tally Corpse-father Odin  
up well  
ancient tales of folk, from the first I recall?
2. I recall those giants, born early on,  
who long ago brought me up;  
nine worlds I recall, nine wood-dwelling witches,  
the famed tree of fate down under the earth.
3. It was early in ages when Ymir made Ymir 'Groaner',  
primordial giant  
his home,  
there was neither sand nor sea, nor cooling waves;  
no earth to be found, nor heaven above:  
a gulf beguiling, nor grass anywhere.
4. Before Bur's sons brought up the lands, Bur's sons Odin and his  
brothers Vili and Vé  
they who moulded famed middle-earth;  
Sun shone from the south on the stones of the hall:  
then the ground grew with the leek's green growth.
5. Sun, Moon's escort, flung from the south  
her right arm round heaven's rim.  
Sun did not know where she had a hall;  
the stars knew not where they had stations,  
Moon did not know what might he had.
6. Then all the powers went to their thrones of destiny,  
high-holy gods, and deliberated this:  
to Night and her children they gave their names:  
Morning they called one, another Mid-day,  
Afternoon and Evening, to tally up the years.

7. The Æsir assembled on Action-field,  
they who built high-timbered temples and altars;  
they set down forges, fashioned treasures,  
shaped tongs, and fabricated tools.
8. They played board-games in the meadow: they  
made merry;  
in no way for them was there want of gold  
until there came three ogres' daughters,  
vastly mighty, from Giants' Domain.

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[*Dvergatal* ('The tally of dwarfs'):]

9. Then all the powers went to their thrones of destiny,  
high-holy gods, and deliberated this:  
who should shape the troop of dwarfs,  
from Brimir's blood, from Bláin's limbs.
10. There was Mótsognir made most esteemed  
of all the dwarfs, and Durin next;  
many man-shaped forms they made,  
dwarfs from earth, as Durin told:
11. New-moon, Moon-wane, North and South,  
East and West, All-stealer, Dawdler,  
Trembler, Grumbler, Tubby, Old Salt,  
Friend and Friendly, Great-grandpa, Mead-wolf.
12. Swig and Wand-elf, Wind-elf, Urge,  
Knowing and Daring, Spurt, Wise and Bright,  
Corpse and New-counsel – now the dwarfs –  
Regin and Cunning-counsel – have I reckoned aright.

13. Filer, Wedger, New-found, Needler,  
Handle, Slogger, Craftsman, Waster,  
Swift, Horn-bearer, Famed and Puddle,  
Mud-plain, Warrior, Oaken-shield.
14. Time it is to reckon back to Praiser,  
the dwarfs in Dawdler's band for the children of men:  
those who sought from halls of stone  
the dwellings of Mud-plains on Soily-flats.
15. There was Dripper and Eager-for-strife,  
Grey, Mound-treader, Shelter-plain, Glowing,  
Artisan, Stainer, Crooked-Finn, Great-grandpa.
16. Elf and Yngvi, Oaken-shield,  
Much-wise and Frosty, Finn and Beguiler;  
there will remain in memory while the world lasts,  
the lineage of Praiser, properly listed.

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[return to *Völuspá*:]

17. Until there came three from that company,  
powerful and pleasant Æsir to a house.  
They found on land, lacking vigour,  
Ash and Embla, free of fate.
18. Breath they had not, energy they held not,  
no warmth, nor motion, nor healthy looks;  
breath gave Odin, energy gave Hœnir,  
warmth gave Lódur, and healthy looks.
19. An ash I know stands, Yggdrasil by name,  
a high tree, drenched with bright white mud;  
from there come the dews that drop in the dales,  
it always stands green over Destiny's well.

20. From there come maidens, knowing much,  
three from the lake that stands under the tree:  
Destiny they called one, Becoming the second  
– they carved on wood-tablets – Shall-be the third;  
laws they laid down, lives they chose  
for the children of mankind, the fates of men.
21. She remembers the war, the first in the world,  
when they stabbed at Gold-draught with many spears,  
and in the hall of the High One they burned *High One* Odin  
her body.  
Three times they burned the one thrice-born,  
often, over again; yet she lives still.
22. They called her Brightness, when she came to their  
homes,  
a witch who could foretell; she knew the skill of wands,  
she made magic where she could, made magic in a  
trance;  
she was always a delight to a wicked woman.
23. Then all the powers went to their thrones of destiny,  
high-holy gods, and deliberated this:  
whether the Æsir were obliged to render tribute,  
and all the gods were obliged to pay the price.
24. Odin flung his spear, cast it into the host,  
still that was the war, the first in the world;  
the shield-wall was shattered of the  
fortress of the Æsir, *fortress of the Æsir Ásgard*  
the Vanir with war-spells trampled the battlefield.
25. Then all the powers went to their thrones of destiny,  
high-holy gods, and deliberated this:  
who had mixed the whole sky with mischief  
or given Ód's girl to giants' kin. *Ód's girl Freyja*

26. Thor alone threw blows there, bursting with rage  
– he seldom sits still when he hears such things said –  
oaths were trampled, words and assurances,  
every binding pledge that had passed between.
27. She knows that Heimdall's hearing is hidden  
under that brilliant holy tree;  
she sees a river surge with a muddy stream  
from Corpse-father's pledge: do you know yet, or what?
28. Alone she sat out, when the aged one came, *aged one* Odin  
the Dread One of the Æsir, and she looked *Dread One of*  
in his eye: *the Æsir* Odin  
'What do you ask me? Why do you try me?  
I know it all, Odin: where you hid your eye,  
in the much-famed fountain of Mímir;  
Mímir sips mead every morning  
from Corpse-father's pledge: do you know yet, or what?'
29. War-father picked for her rings and circlets: *War-father* Odin  
he had back wise tidings and wands of prophecy;  
she saw widely and widely beyond, over every world.
30. She saw valkyries come from widely beyond,  
ready to ride to the people of the gods.  
Shall-be bore one shield, Brandisher another,  
Battle, War, Wand-maid and Spear-brandisher:  
now are reckoned War-lord's ladies, *War-lord* Odin  
ready to ride over earth, valkyries.
31. I saw for Baldr, the blood-stained god,  
Odin's son, his fate fully settled;  
there stood blooming, above the ground,  
meagre, mighty beautiful: mistletoe.

32. From that plant, that seemed so slender,  
Höd learned to shoot a dangerous dart of harm;  
Baldr's brother was quickly born:  
that son of Odin learned to kill one night old.
33. He never washed hands nor combed his head,  
till he put to the pyre Baldr's foe;  
but Frigg lamented in Fen-halls,  
for Slain-hall's woe: do you know yet, or what?
- [34. Then Váli's war-bands were woven Váli Loki's son  
– rather hard were the bonds – out of his own guts.]
35. She saw a prisoner prostrate under Kettle-grove,  
in the likeness of Loki, ever eager for harm;  
there sits Sigyn, over her husband,  
but she feels little glee: do you know yet, or what?
36. A river flows from the East through venom-valleys  
with knives and swords: Stern is its name.
37. There stood to the north, on Moon-wane-plains,  
a hall of gold, of Sindri's line; Sindri 'Sparky', a dwarf?  
a second stood, on Never-cooled,  
the beer-hall of a giant, the one called Brimir.
38. A hall she saw standing far from the sun,  
on Dead-body-strands: its doors face north;  
venom-drops flowed in through the roof-holes:  
that hall is plaited from serpents' spines.
39. She saw there wading through heavy currents,  
men false-sworn and murderous men,  
and those who gull another's faithfulest girl;  
there Spite-striker sucks the bodies of the dead  
– a wolf tore men – do you know yet, or what?

40. East sat an old crone in Iron-wood,  
and suckled there the seed of Fenrir: seed of Fenrir  
monstrous wolves  
from them all shall emerge a certain one,  
a grabber of the moon in monstrous guise.
41. He is filled with the life-blood of doomed men,  
reddens the powers' dwellings with ruddy gore;  
the sun-beams turn black the following summer,  
all weather woeful: do you know yet, or what?
42. There sat on a grave-mound and plucked at a harp,  
the giantess's herdsman, happy Eggthér;  
over him there crowed in Gallows-wood,  
a bright-red cock, whose name is Much-wise.
43. Over the Æsir there crowed Golden-comb,  
who wakes the warriors at Host-father's home;  
another crows beneath the earth,  
a soot-red cock in the halls of Hel.
44. Garm howls loud before Looming-cave,  
the bond will break, and the ravenous one run;  
much lore she knows, I see further ahead,  
of the powers' fate, implacable, of the victory-gods.
45. Brothers will struggle and slaughter each other,  
and sisters' sons spoil kinship's bonds.  
It's hard on earth: great whoredom;  
axe-age, blade-age, shields are split;  
wind-age, wolf-age, before the world crumbles:  
no one shall spare another.
46. Mím's sons sport, the wood of destiny is wood of destiny  
Yggdrasil  
kindled  
at the ancient Sounding-horn.  
Heimdall blows loud, the horn is aloft,  
Odin speaks with Mím's head.

47. The standing ash of Yggdrasil shudders,  
the aged tree groans, and the giant breaks free.  
All are afraid on the paths of Hel,  
before Surt's kin swallows it up. *Surt fire-giant*
48. What's with the Æsir? What's with the elves?  
All Giants' Domain groans, the Æsir hold council,  
the dwarfs murmur before their stone doors,  
lords of the cliff-wall: do you know yet, or what?
49. Garm now howls loud before Looming-cave,  
the bond will break, and the ravenous one run;  
much lore she knows, I see further ahead,  
of the powers' fate, implacable, of the victory-gods.
50. Hrym drives from the East, holds his shield *Hrym giant*  
ahead,  
Great-wand writhes in giant-wrath; *Great-wand World-serpent*  
the serpent strikes waves, the eagle screams,  
pale-beaked rips bodies, Nail-boat breaks free.
51. A vessel journeys from the East, Muspell's troops  
will come,  
over the waters, while Loki steers.  
All the monstrous offspring accompany the ravenous one,  
The brother of Býleist is with them on the *brother of Býleist Loki*  
trip.
52. Surt comes from the South with what damages *damages branches fire*  
branches,  
there shines from his sword the sun of corpse-gods;  
rock-cliffs clash, troll-wives crash,  
warriors tread Hel-roads, and heaven is rent.
53. Then there comes for Hlín a second sorrow, *Hlín Frigg*  
when Odin goes to fight the wolf  
and Beli's bright bane against Surt:  
then's when Frigg's beloved must fall. *Beli's bane Frey*

- [54. Then there comes the great son of Victory-  
father, *Victory-father Odin*  
Vidar, to fight against the slaughtering *slaughtering beast Fenrir*  
beast;  
with his hand he sends his sword to the heart  
of Hvedrung's son: then his father is *Hvedrung Loki*  
avenged.]
55. The earth's girdle gapes over heaven, *earth's girdle World-serpent*  
the dread serpent's jaws yawn on high,  
Odin's son must meet the serpent, *Odin's son Thor*  
when the wolf is dead, and Vídar's kin. *Vidar's kin Odin*
56. Then there comes the famous offspring *offspring of Hlödýn Thor*  
of Hlödýn,  
Odin's son goes to fight the serpent;  
the defender of middle-earth strikes in his *defender of middle-earth Thor*  
wrath;  
– all warriors must abandon their homesteads –  
he goes nine paces, the son of Fjörgyn, *son of Fjörgyn Thor*  
spent, from the snake that fears no spite.
57. The sun turns black, land sinks into sea;  
the bright stars scatter from the sky.  
Flame flickers up against the world-tree;  
fire flies high against heaven itself.
58. Garm now howls loud before Looming-cave,  
the bond will break, and the ravenous one run;  
much lore she knows, I see further ahead,  
of the powers' fate, implacable, of the victory-gods.
59. She sees rising up a second time  
the earth from the ocean, ever-green;  
the cataracts tumble, an eagle flies above,  
hunting fish along the fell.

60. The Æsir come together on Action-field,  
and pass judgement on the powerful  
earth-coil,  
*earth-coil World-serpent*  
and commemorate there the mighty events,  
*Potent-god Odin*  
and the ancient runes of Potent-god.
61. Afterwards there will be found, wondrous,  
golden gaming-pieces in the grass,  
those which in ancient days they had owned.
62. All unsown the fields will grow,  
all harm will be healed, Baldr will come;  
Höd and Baldr will inhabit Hropt's victory-  
*Hropt Odin*  
halls,  
sanctuaries of the slain-gods: do you know yet, or what?
63. Then Hœnir shall choose the wooden lots,  
and the sons of two brothers build *two brothers Vili and Vé?*  
dwellings *or Höd and Baldr?*  
in the wide wind-home: do you know yet, or what?
64. She sees a hall standing, more beautiful than the sun,  
better than gold, at Gimlé.  
Virtuous folk shall live there,  
and enjoy pleasure the live-long day.
- [65. Then there comes the mighty one down from above,  
the strong one, who governs everything, to powerfulness.]
66. Then there comes there the dark dragon flying,  
the glittering snake up from Moon-wane-hills,  
it bears in its wings – and flies over the plain –  
dead bodies: Spite-striker; now she must sink.

*Hávamál: The lay of the High One*

1. Every gateway, before going ahead,  
one should peer at,  
one should glimpse at;  
no one knows for sure what enemies  
are sitting ahead in the hall.
2. Good luck to who gives; a guest has  
entered; *guest or Gest: Odin*  
where should he find somewhere to sit?  
Very jumpy's the one who by the blaze  
must make a test of his luck.
3. Fire is required by one who's entered  
and is chilled to the knee;  
food and clothes are required by anyone  
who's journeyed over the fells.
4. Water is required by one come to dine:  
a towel and friendly welcome;  
a kind disposition, if it's to be had,  
speech and silence in return.
5. Sense is required by one who roams widely;  
at home all is easy to handle;  
he gets sidelong glances, who knows not a thing  
and sits among the wise.
6. No man ought to boast about his brains,  
but rather beware with his wits;  
when one sensible and silent comes to the house  
seldom wrong befalls the wary;  
no man ever had a friend more faithful  
than a good store of common sense.