

Gudrid the Wanderer TCAN

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Kalevala II

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Kalevala (prologue)

MASTERED by desire impulsive,
By a mighty inward urging,
I am ready now for singing,
Ready to begin the chanting
Of our nation's ancient folk-song
Handed down from by-gone ages.
In my mouth the words are melting,
From my lips the tones are gliding,
From my tongue they wish to hasten;
When my willing teeth are parted,
When my ready mouth is opened,
Songs of ancient wit and wisdom
Hasten from me not unwilling.

Vinland The Good (2:50)

There on the strand did the broad sea-boat stand
The ring-prowed, the dragon ship proud
With fifty brave warriors and five women wise
We set sail for the land of the vines.

The sea-goer moved foamy-necked, floated forth
The woollen sail snapped in the spray
The world candle carried us into the west
O'er the whale-path we set forth that day.

For nine days and nine nights we never lost heart
for the fifth ship to follow were we
Where Erik the Red sent three of Erik's sons
And the storm-tossed sea warrior Bjarni.

He told of a land where wheat and grapes grew
A land of flat stones, Helluland
Then Markland of forest, and Vinland of vines
and the sand on the broad Wunderstrand.

Our sea-dragon surged o'er the strong struggling waves
When we came at last to Leif the Lucky's land
In his longhouses, turf-roofed, our troop found its rest
And rejoiced in our fair newfound land.

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Gudrid's Saga (5:35)

And so we did rejoice...at first. It seems so far away now. Those two short years, as I stand on the deck of the knarr, and look back at the turf-roofed house, it seems as if I can see our two years, and our fears, walking in the shallow bay. And I look behind me, and I know that I have left far more than I can ever say.

Here it was that I bore my child. Here it was that I finally saw the New World: I, Gudridur Thorbjörnarsdóttir, who sent three husbands to Vinland and at last came myself to this new land.

I was born at Laugabrekka in Snaefellsness, in the settlement near Eiríksfjörð in Iceland.

-25 Eirik leaves Norway for Iceland 983

Eirik the Red and his father left the Jaeder (in Norway) for Iceland because of some killings. Eirik sailed to the open sea by way of Snæfellsjökull and made his landfall at the glacier which is called Blaserk. He made his way into the western wilderness, bestowing place-names far and wide.

Eirik spent three winters in Eiríksfjörð and then came to blows with some friends. This same summer Eirik went off to colonize that land he had discovered, calling it Greenland, for he argued that men would be all the more drawn to go there if the land had an attractive name.

-20 Daughter of Thorbjorn Vifilsson; fostered by Orm of Arnarstapi

It was my father, Thorbjörn Vifilsson, who brought me to Greenland to follow Eirik the Red. Thorbjörn was a Christian, a follower of Aud the Deep-Minded. She made her home at Hvamm and had a place for her devotions at Krossholar, where she had crosses erected, for she had been baptized and held strongly to the Christian faith. Aud too had sailed to Iceland when her father, Thorstein the warrior-king, was betrayed by the Scots and fell in battle. Aud was in Caithness when she heard tell of Thorstein's death. She had a merchant ship built secretly in the forest, and once she was ready hoisted sail for the Orkneys and... set off to seek Iceland.

VOYAGE theme

Aud had twenty freemen on board her ship. One of these was called Vifil. He was a man of good family who had been taken prisoner over the western sea and was, nominally at least, a slave till Aud set him free. When Aud gave homes to her ship's crew, Vifil asked why she didn't give him one like the rest of them, but Aud said it would signify little. He would be counted a fine man, she said, whatever his position. Still, she gave him Vifildal and he made his home there. He married a wife, and their sons were Thorgeir and Thorbjorn. These were promising men and grew up with their father.

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Thorgeir Vifilsson found himself a wife, marrying Arnora the daughter of Einar of Laugarbrekka. Her sister was Hallveig, whom Thorbiorn Vifilsson married, getting land at Laugarbrekka, at Hellisvellir, along with her. Thorbjorn moved house there and became a man of great note. He was a good farmer and had a fine estate. I was his daughter, Gudrid by name, and he told me always that I was a most beautiful woman and distinguished in everything I did and was.

And of all the things I did and I was, I loved best to sing and to wander. In the spring I would walk along the cliffs from Laugarbrekka to Arnarstapi, collecting eggs from the thousands of birds along the cliffs. They sang and wheeled and cried overhead, and I sang to them in turn.

Ság ég Spóa (spring round)

Living at Arnarstapi was a man by the name of Orm, who had a wife named Halldis. Orm was a good farmer and a close friend of Thorbjorn's, and I was there a good long time with him as his foster-child.

wooed by Einar Thorgeirsson, his suit rejected, goes with her parents to Greenland 988

But I shall tell you of how my father and Orm and Halldis brought me to Greenland when I did not wish to marry against my will. There was a trader named Einar, whose father had been a slave and who was something of a dandy. He saw me at Ormur's farm in Arnarstapi and meant to try for my hand. 'Why yes, she has been asked for, friend naturally,' Orm told him, 'but she is not just for the picking up. It is the general opinion that she will be rather particular in her choice of a husband, and her father too.'

All the same, Einar wanted Orm to put the case to his friend Thorbjorn. Orm brought me to my father and said, 'It could well prove of great assistance to you, franklin, from the money point of view.'

'I did not expect such words from you', replied Thorbjorn, 'as that I should marry daughter of mine to the son of a slave. You must be convinced my money is running out, and she shall not go back home with you, since you consider her worth so poor a marriage.'

And so I stayed behind with my father and spent the winter in my own home. In the spring my father prepared a great feast for all his friends. In the course of the feast Thorbjorn called for silence and spoke:

'I prefer to uproot my home rather than destroy my good name, and will sooner depart the country than bring shame on my family. I plan to fall back on the promise of my friend Eirik the Red, and I mean to go to Greenland this summer.'

This change of plan of his dumbfounded his hearers, but there could be no dissuading him. Thorbjorn gave presents to his guests, sold his lands and bought

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himself a ship. Thirty men came with him, among them Orm of Arnarstapi and his wife, Halldis my foster-mother. And in due course we put to sea.

STORM/FUNERAL theme

As they set off the weather was fine, but once we were out at sea the good wind dropped; we were caught in a great storm, and made slow progress the whole summer through. Next sickness broke out in our company, and Orm died, as did Halldis his wife, and half our ship's company. A big sea got up, and we suffered great hardship and misery of all kinds, yet with it all reached Herjolfsnes in Greenland right at the start of winter. A n excellent farmer by the name of Thorkel took Thorbjorn into his house for the winter with our entire crew, and right royally he entertained us. Thorbjorn and all his shipmates had a very good time there.

--9 assists sybil at Herjofsness, hears her future prophesied999

At this same time there was a great famine in Greenland; men who had gone out fishing and hunting made poor catches, and some never came back.

There was a woman there in the Settlement whose name was Thorbjorg; she was a seeress and was called the Little Sibyl. . Because Thorkel was the leading householder there it was considered his responsibility to find out when these hard times which now troubled us would come to an end, so he invited her to his home and fested her and she slept the night through.

On the morrow, she was fitted out to perform her spells. She asked too to procure her such women as knew the Vardlokur , the chant of incantation. But no such women were to be found, so there was a search made right through the house to find whether anyone was versed in these matters.

'I am unversed in magic,' was my reply, 'neither am I a prophetess, yet Halldis my foster-mother taught me in Iceland the chant which she called Vardlokkur.'

'Then you are wiser than I dared hope,' said Thorbjorg.

'But this is a kind of lore and proceeding I feel I cannot assist in,' said I, 'for I am a Christian woman.'

'Yet it might happen,' said Thorbjorg, 'that you could prove helpful to people in this affair, and still be no worse a woman than before. Still, I leave it to Thorkel to procure me the things I need here.'

Thorkel now pressed me hard, till I said I would do as he wished. The women now formed a circle all round, while Thorbjorg took her seat up on the spell-platform and I began to sing the Vardlokkur.

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Manaus (word of incantation)

The seeress thanked me for the chant, saying that I had attracted many spirits there who thought it lovely to lend ear to the chant-- spirits 'who before wished to hold aloof from us, and pay us no heed.

“And now many things stand revealed to me which earlier were hidden from me as from others. And I can tell you that this famine will not last longer than this winter, and that the season will mend when spring comes. The sickness which has long afflicted us, that too will mend sooner than was expected. As for you, Gudrid, I shall repay you here and now for the help we have derived from you, for your future is now an open book to me. You will make a match here in Greenland, the most distinguished there is, yet it will not prove of long duration; for your ways lie out to Iceland, where there will spring from you a great and goodly progeny, and over this progeny of yours shall a bright ray shine. And so, my daughter, farewell now, and happiness go with you.’

WEDDING theme

And happiness did go with me. The weather quickly improved with the advent of spring, and my father Thorbjorn put his ship in readiness and journeyed on till we reached Brattahlid. Eirik welcomed him with open arms. Next spring Eirik gave Thorbjorn land at Stokkaness, a fine house was built there, and there we lived from that time forward. And the following spring I was married to Thorir the Norwegian and sailed with him on his fishing and trading voyages from Greenland.

-18

Leif sails for Vinland

990

Eirik had a wife whose name was Thjodhild, and two sons, Thorstein and Leif, and a daughter, Freydis. Freydis was a domineering woman who was married to a man named Thorvard. He was a man of no consequence and she had been married to him mainly for his money.

Thorstein was living at home with his father, and no man then in Greenland was held as promising as he. Leif had sailed to Norway, where he was resident with king Olaf Tryggvason. This king commanded him to preach Christianity in Greenland, and so Leif sailed to the west to carry out his mission. Heathen were the people of Greenland at that time, although my father and I were Christian Icelanders.

STORM theme

Leif put to sea as soon as he was ready, was storm-tossed a long time, and lighted on those lands whose existence he had not so much as dreamt of before. Leif set foot on this land he called Helluland, Stone-Slab land, and Markland (Forest Land), and then built booths where a river flowed into a sea from a lake.

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There were wheat fields self-sown there and vines too. Tyrkir the German found grapevines and grapes. There were also those trees which are called maple, and they fetched away with them samples of all these things, some trees so big that they were used in housebuilding. Leif named the land Vinland for its natural features.

VOYAGE theme

8 **Is said to be wife of Thorir the Norwegian and rescued from shipwreck by Leif Eiriksson; is widowed** **1000**

When spring came they made the ship ready and set sail. They came in sight of Greenland and the mountains under its glaciers, and Leif steered a course close to the wind as he saw a ship or a skerry. Then he saw men on the skerry, and a woman too, for I was with my husband and his crew and we had been wrecked while fishing on this skerry and dared not hope of rescue. Then Leif sailed close and lowered their sail and put out their boats and invited us all on board with as much of our valuables as the ship could carry. We sailed to Brattahlid and Leif invited us to spend the winter with him, and found places for all our crew. Leif rescued fifteen of us from the skerry, and after this he was called Leif the Lucky.

But fisherman are like to drown. And one day Thorir and his men came not back from the fishing, and we mourned them as all those lost to the sea.

FUNERAL theme

-6 **marries Thorstein Eiriksson** **1002**

And my second husband was Leif's brother, Thorstein, an Eiriksson too. Even had they driven Erik the Red out of the home country, still his sons determined ever after to go farther and farther into the New World.

And so it was that Thorvald, not to be outdone, would follow Leif and Bjarni across the sea. And he too found Leifsbudir.

But his men came back empty-handed, and Thorvald died there in Vinland. Unknown where it is he lies.

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Vem kan segle

-5 Thorvald sails for Vinland 1003

-5 Accompanies Thorstein in unsuccessful journey to Vinland 1003

FUNERAL theme

-4 Thorvald Eiriksson dies 1004

-3 Goes to Lysufjord in Western settlement where Thorstein dies and prophecies her future, returns to Brattahlid 1005

WEDDING theme

-1 Marries Thorfinn Karlsefni 1007

And when he lay dying of a fever they say he prophesied that I would marry an Icelander.

And indeed he had the gift of prophecy, for that next year, from the west, came from Iceland the ship of Thorfinn Karlsefni, and before a year was out he had gone to Eirik the Red and asked for my hand. And there we were married in the church at Godhaab.

0 Accompanies Karlsefni to Vinland 1008

And we determined that there should be a Christian colony in the New World. And so we, who had like Thorfinn taken the new religion, would take it farther to the west. Fifty men, five women, and a cow, in an open boat to cross the sea.

VOYAGE theme

And so we came to Leifsbudír, and many were our adventures there.

0 Gives birth to son Snorri in Vinland 1008

Bí, bí og blaka (lullaby)

Bi, bí og blaka

Álftirnar kvaka

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Ég læt sem ég sofi

Ég er að fá plata.

1 Sees apparition of woman

1009

3 Returns with Karlsefni to Iceland, their descendants listed 1011

And it seemed now that all I could remember was five minutes hence, when I had stood in the grass. All of my things had been gathered. Late in the year it was, and the ice would soon close in the bay. But still I stood in the grass and hunted and hunted for I could not bear to lose the one thing I had brought with me—my spindle whorl. The léinne for three wedding dresses had I spun, and for two graves the shrouds. And so, when my young son was born, had I spun and woven the cloth to wrap him and to swaddle him.

It seemed as if all of those long winters I had done nothing but sit and spin, with the smoke from the smoke-hole of the turf-roofed house in my eyes. It seemed as if there was one long thread that spun me back to Godhaab, to Iceland, and back to Norway. And here I had dropped it in the grass.

Snorri cried in my arms, and from the knarr came the cry, Gudrid come! We will miss the tide! And still I looked and hunted and hunted in the grass. And then the wind came, and snapped my cloak open, and whipped the pin away, and I was left with the round ring only in my hand. Gudrid come! We will miss the tide! And so I took a last look at the turf-roofed house.

And I stand now on the deck of the ship, Snorri warm in my arms, to be borne again back to Godhaab. So few we are now, with so many dreams—snapped, like the pin. And I think of my search in the grass and I wonder—will anyone ever know that we were ever here?

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after the 10th c. Saxon poems, The Wanderer and The Seafarer

Troubled is my heart as I gaze across the frost-cold sea
Tomorrow will the whale-path carry me again to my country.
Who will follow? Surely they will come.
Who will know us when our work is done?

The memory of my kinsmen moves within me even as they fade
Again I send my warrior out across the winter-woven wave.
Who will follow? Surely they will come.
Who will know us when our work is done?

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Here wealth is fleeting, friend is fleeting, man and woman fleeting fall
The hearth is cold, the land is cold, my heart is cold to leave this hall.
Who will follow? Surely they will come.
Who will know us when our work is done?

My son, you are a warrior, eldest born of this newfounded land.
I wonder, will the whale-path carry you again to fair Vinland?
Who will follow? Surely they will come.
Who will know us when our work is done?
Troubled is my heart as I gaze across the frost-cold sea.

Epilogue (audio: Hildegard von Bingen)

10 **Goes on pilgrimage to Rome. Becomes an anchorite** **1018**

Now I sit in silence, spinning
Soul in quiet contemplation
Gudrid, daughter, wife and mother
Long a pilgrimage was making.
From the western wilds of Vinland
Back across the seas to Greenland,
Iceland, Norway, heavy laden.
Traders traveled down the rivers
I, a pilgrim, traveled with them
Rome at last my destination.
There my soul was soothed in singing
Sanctuary called me homeward.
North I sailed to Laugarbrekka
Snorri too had traveled with me.
Snorri Thorbjornsson, made bishop
Built a hut for me at Glaumbaer
Anchoress and nun they call me.
Here I sit in silence, spinning
Legends of my life unwinding.

Kalevala II

There are many other legends,
Incantations that were taught me,
That I found along the wayside,
Gathered in the fragrant copses,
Blown me from the forest branches,
Culled among the plumes of pine-trees,
Scented from the vines and flowers,
Whispered to me as I followed

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Flocks in land of honeyed meadows,
Over hillocks green and golden,
After sable-haired Murikki,
And the many-colored Kimmo.
Many runes the cold has told me,
Many lays the rain has brought me,
Other songs the winds have sung me;
Many birds from many forests,
Oft have sung me lays n concord
Waves of sea, and ocean billows,
Music from the many waters,
Music from the whole creation,
Oft have been my guide and master.
Sentences the trees created,
Rolled together into bundles,
Moved them to my ancient dwelling,
On the sledges to my cottage,
Tied them to my garret rafters,
Hung them on my dwelling-portals,
Laid them in a chest of boxes,
Boxes lined with shining copper.
Long they lay within my dwelling
Through the chilling winds of winter,
In my dwelling-place for ages.

Shall I bring these songs together
From the cold and frost collect them?
Shall I bring this nest of boxes,
Keepers of these golden legends,
To the table in my cabin,
Underneath the painted rafters,
In this house renowned and ancient?
Shall I now these boxes open,
Boxes filled with wondrous stories?
Shall I now the end unfasten
Of this ball of ancient wisdom,
These ancestral lays unravel?