

SUMMARIES OF THE BALLADS

HELEN F. LESLIE-JACOBSEN

Regin the Smith (Regin smiður)

(1)¹ The singer opens the ballad by declaring he will sing about mighty kings. (2–3) Sigmundur and Hjördis get married and celebrate with a feast at Christmas. (4–8) Soon, however, war descends on the land, the men go into battle and Sigmundur is fatally wounded. (9–24) Hjördis goes to the battlefield to find him, and as Sigmundur dies, he recounts the battle and foretells she will have a boy and she is to give him the name Sjúrdur. He gives her the pieces of his broken sword and tells her the boy must avenge his death and that Regin the smith must forge a new sword from the pieces. He mentions that the dragon Frænar lies on Glitrarheiði and that Regin is loyal to few. Sigmundur then finally dies. (25–26) Hjördis leaves crying, and King Hjalprek visits her. (27–33) Hjördis gives birth to a boy and names him Sjúrdur, has him baptized, and takes great care of him. (34–35) Hjördis then marries Hjalprek. (36–42) Sjúrdur grows up with his mother in Hjalprek's kingdom (who fosters him), growing extremely fast and becomes very strong, until he was able to give heavy blows to the king's men. (43–51) He kills some of the king's men and eventually the boys tire of being beaten and tell him it would be better to avenge his father than to beat them. Sjúrdur then goes to his mother and demands to know about his father and what had happened to him. She informs him that the sons of Hundingur killed Sigmundur, but she doesn't have much hope that he will manage to take revenge. (52–60) Sjúrdur rebuffs his mother, saying young dogs often have sharp teeth, and Hjördis gives him the sword pieces, showing him Sigmundur's blood-drenched clothing. She instructs him to visit Regin to get a new sword forged from the pieces, and echoes Sigmundur by mentioning the dragon Frænar on Glitrarheiði and that Regin is loyal to few again. (61–64) Sjúrdur asks for his mother's help in getting a horse, and she advises him to throw a rock in the river and to pick the horse that doesn't run away. He does so and picks the horse Grani. (65–72) Sjúrdur goes to find Regin and asks him to forge a sword from the two pieces from Sigmundur. (73–79) Regin only works on the sword one night, and when Sjúrdur returns to try it, it breaks into two pieces. (80–87) Sjúrdur threatens to kill Regin if

I Numbers in parentheses correspond to stanzas in the ballads being referenced.

he doesn't make a better sword, and Regin says he will do so if he can have the heart of the dragon. (88–97) Regin now works on the sword for thirty nights, and when Sjúrdur returns to try it, the sword is so good that when he tries it, Sjúrdur splits the anvil apart and the block underneath. He calls the sword Gramm. (98–104) Regin wants to come with him to Glitrarheiði but first Sjúrdur avenges his father by killing the sons of Hundingur. (105–15) After Sjúrdur has ridden through the forest, an old man joins him on a beach, it is Nornagestur. Nornagestur asks who is with Sjúrdur, and when Sjúrdur explains it is Regin the smith, who is also the dragon's brother, Nornagestur tells Sjúrdur that Regin intends for him to die by giving him poor advice on how many trenches to dig to avoid the dragon's poison, and explains how to circumvent this. (116–19) Sjúrdur prepares himself and the dragon has left the gold and is lying under a waterfall. (120–28) Sjúrdur attacks the dragon and the foundations of the world tremble. As the dragon dies, it converses with Sjúrdur, asking who he is. Sjúrdur identifies himself, the dragon asks who came with him and advises him to kill Regin, since the dragon knows he will kill Sjúrdur. (129–35) Sjúrdur roasts the heart of the dragon, he burns his hands, and sticks his hands in his mouth and can understand the language of birds and animals.² The birds tell him to eat the heart himself rather than give it to Regin, and Regin lies down to drink the dragon blood, and Sjúrdur kills him. (136–41) Sjúrdur gets a large amount of gold and straps twelve chests to Grani's back and mounts him (displeasing the horse). Grani leaps over a river and the buckle bursts, and Nornagestur gets the buckle. (142) The narrator ends the ballad.

The Ballad of Brynhild (Brynhildar táttur)

(1–3) The narrator begins the ballad and tells about King Buðlin, who goes into his daughter's hall. (4–13) His daughter, Brynhild, sits on Hildarfjall on her throne, combing her hair and rejecting suitors. Her father comes in and demands that she stop refusing men. (14–26) She tells her father that Sjúrdur is the only man she will accept, her father points out she has never seen him and she replies that the norns have decreed this. Buðlin asks how Sjúrdur is better than other men, and she lists his exploits, including slaying the dragon Frænir. (27–34) Buðlin asks how they will get Sjúrdur to come to them, and Brynhild asks for a hall surrounded by a wall of fire to be conjured

² It is not explicitly stated in the ballad, but in Old Norse tradition it is consuming the blood of the dragon by sucking his burnt hands after he prods the heart to see whether it is done that allows him to understand the speech of birds.

up by dwarves, that only Sjúrdur can ride through, which is done. (35) An interjection describing how many men have lost their lives for women. (36–46) Noble men ride to Buðli's hall,³ King Gunnar arrives and Buðli tells Brynhild she must accept him. She hurries away to Hildarheygur, her mound (on which her hall stands). Grímur and Høgnar fight. (47–60) Brynhild, sitting on her throne, draws Sjúrdur to her. He rides out and the birds tell him she is expecting him. Dressed in gold gloves and gold rings, he leaves for Buðli's land, riding the unequalled horse Grani. (61–69) Sjúrdur rides down by Júki's court on the way, and Grimhild, curious about where he is going, stands outside and tries to stop him, as she has a daughter who wants to marry him. He says he must keep going to the wall of fire. He gets dressed and says he has an errand to go there. (70–81) No one dares to cross the wall of fire to win Brynhild; Grímur turns back. (73–97) Sjúrdur is the only one who manages to ride onto Brynhilduheygur. Grani's hooves thunder as he leaps over and the fire burns around them, they reach a golden gate and Sjúrdur chops down the door with his sword. He then splits off the latch, and he sees Brynhild in bed, lying in armour, which he splits open with his sword. This wakes her, and she asks who he is, he identifies himself and she welcomes him. He says to have been shown the way to her by an eagle. Brynhild wants him to ask her father if they can marry, but Sjúrdur declines to do so, saying she has waited long enough. They fall in love and conceive a child, Ása Sjúrdardóttir. He gives her twelve gold rings. (98–113) Guðrun draws Sjúrdur to her. Sjúrdur asks Brynhild to fetch him a saddle, bridle and armour; Brynhild's heart chills, she understands Guðrun's plan. Sjúrdur declares it unlikely he would lose his love for her, but Brynhild begs him not to go. Sjúrdur rides away early one morning and meets her father on the way. Her father knows what will happen and foretells he will marry Guðrun and never have Brynhild. He says Sjúrdur ought to keep his promise to Brynhild, but Sjúrdur once again declares it unlikely he would lose his love for her, although her father warns him that something shameful will happen and he should not ride to the court of Júki, and asks Sjúrdur to remember his words. (114–37) Sjúrdur rides into the woods and encounters a beast spewing fire and poison. It suddenly disappears and Grimhild is sitting in its place. She bewitches his horse so that he can not continue, and she grabs the reins. Sjúrdur says this is bold of her, she asks him to stop and speak to her beautiful daughter. Sjúrdur says she is not equal to Brynhild. Guðrun comes out and says it will hardly go well to covet a man another has, for which her

3 In some parts of the ballad the name is Buðlin, in some parts Buðli.

mother hits her in the mouth and tells her to hold her tongue. Guðrun mixes a drink of forgetfulness, and Sjúrdur loses his memory, forgets about Brynhild, and wants to marry Guðrun. (138–42) Sjúrdur goes to the bedroom to find Guðrun, Brynhild hears about it and is full of spite. The narrator says Sjúrdur will lose his life. Brynhild says Guðrun will not have him, and echoes Guðrun’s words that to covet a man another has will not go well. (143–54) Brynhild and Guðrun meet, one happy and one in grief. They are at a river and Guðrun will not use the water flowing downstream from Brynhild washing her hair because she married Sjúrdur and thus thinks herself superior, so she goes further out into the river. Guðrun asks where Brynhild got her ring from and she answers that she was given it by Sjúrdur. Guðrun wonders why King Gunnar will not marry Brynhild, but Brynhild says she will not love two kings in one hall. Guðrun says to Brynhild that Sjúrdur took Brynhild’s virginity and points out that now she has him. Brynhild accuses Guðrun of lying and says Sjúrdur shall die. Guðrun is undeterred. (155–160) Brynhild cries and goes to sit in her hall, Gunnar comes to visit her, but she tells him he cannot expect her to love him when Sjúrdur still lives. Sjúrdur comes to see her, she tells him he has not been faithful, and he says his thoughts were turned from her. (161–63) As soon as she sees him, Brynhild delivers a daughter. She orders the baby to be put into the river, and she floats away. (164–69) The narrator says that Brynhild will bring about the death of Sjúrdur and comments that many men have endured threats for women and that women will cause Sjúrdur to die. (170–87) Brynhild, adorned with gold and her hair in a twist, is very angry and goes into the hall. Sjúrdur kicks her chair which angers her. Høgnar says he will take revenge on the one who has offended her, and Brynhild says she cannot sleep while Sjúrdur still lives. Høgnar says Sjúrdur is his sworn brother and he cannot do anything to him, and Brynhild answers he will get no love from her while he still lives. Høgnar says fighting Sjúrdur is no easy task, and she repeats he will get no love from her while Sjúrdur lives. The men plan to ride to the forest, and Brynhild tells them not to return until Sjúrdur has been killed. They ask why she wants to put them in mortal danger since no one can withstand him. They ask her for advice on how to kill him, and she tells them to give him salty food and no drink with it. (188–92) Sjúrdur is in the hall and Brynhild cannot look at him. She says she will never turn her love from him, Sjúrdur acknowledges the situation is bad and says when they return from the forest, he will be betrothed to her. She says that will not happen. (193–209) The men ride out, and Brynhild is left behind crying. Buðlin says Sjúrdur should be given his helmet since he will need to drink from it, but Brynhild says it shall be left behind. Buðlin asks why she is causing his

death, she says it is because he does not love her. Her father reminds her of when she drew Sjúrdur to her. Buðlin walks out of the hall, Brynhild is left with her head in her hands. The narrator comments women are dangerous. Sjúrdur has no idea what is afoot as Brynhild looks out at him riding in front of the men. Sjúrdur's sword is also left behind. Brynhild cries in torment and says she will not see him alive again. (210–28) The men give Sjúrdur salty food and no drink while Brynhild sits on Hildarstólur. Sjúrdur cannot scoop up water to drink since he does not have his helmet, so he loosens his helmet, dismounts and lies down to drink.⁴ Høgnar cuts his throat and Gunnar hacks at him. Sjúrdur says had he known about this, he would have defeated all of them, and he knocks Gunnar off his horse and says that although Høgnar has killed him now, he has defeated him previously in Finnmark. He goes pale. (229–35) A messenger comes to tell Brynhild that Sjúrdur is dead, killed by Gunnar, she faints from Hildarstólur. Gunnar comes to visit her, she is crying in bed and he sits by her bedside. Gunnar says the corpse shall be brought back to the hall. (236–45) The men change horses, but Grani will not move because he has a mind like a person, and will not move until the decapitated Sjúrdur is put on him. Sjúrdur is taken home to the hall and laid by Guðrun. Brynhild is in great distress on seeing the dead man being carried in. (246–56) Brynhild dies of grief. The narrator emphasizes many men have died due to women and gives the examples of Hósin's daughter, Ingigerð, Delilah, Ásla Sjúrdardóttir and Guðrun Júkadóttir. (257–65) The dead Sjúrdur is laid in Guðrun's lap and she wakes covered in blood. She knows Gunnar has been involved in this, and she kisses Sjúrdur, swears to take revenge on Gunnar and runs to her loft. (266–70) It is mentioned again that Brynhild dies of sorrow. Guðrun receives gold, property and rings. A brother and her mother mentions King Artala has a lot of gold. Guðrun replies she will avenge Sjúrdur's death. (271) The narrator ends the ballad.

The Ballad of Høgni (Høgna táttur)

(1–7) Artala is married to Guðrun. He announces to his men this shall be so, and he rides through the forest. Guðrun is stood before him, they are married and he takes her back to Húnaland. Guðrun plots to avenge Sjúrdur. (8–11) Artala invites Júki's people (Guðrun's family) to drink at their home, and Guðrun's invites her brothers. She has wine mixed. (12–20) Høgnar says

4 As noted in the translation, it is emphasized and important for the plot that Sjúrdur does not have a helmet with him. However, in st. 215 it is explicitly stated that he loosens his helmet straps.

he wants to go to Húnaland, but Grimhild warns if he goes, neither he nor the others will return. She wants Gíslar and Jarnar to stay at home, but they go. (21–28) Høgnar meets a mermaid on the beach, and asks her whether he will return safely from Húnaland. She says he will not and he chops her in two pieces and throws her head and body into the sea. Høgnar meets a merman, and asks him whether he will return safely from Húnaland. The merman says he will. (29–34) Høgnar launches a ship. Grimhild, crying, turns back to the court and says she will not see him alive again since she knows Guðrun will harm him. Høgnar tells Gunnar they are setting sail for the sea. (35–44) A man sees the ship and says it must be Høgnar on his way to visit his sister. Guðrun carves runes and send them out to sea. The wind picks up and the weather becomes severe. Høgnar is steering and Gunnar goes pale. The ship creaks and the oars break apart in Høgnar’s hands. They land in Húnaland, the ships still making a lot of noise. (45–51) Høgnar steps on to land with Gíslar, Jarnar, and Gunnar and they go to the castle’s garden. As they enter the castle, Høgnar can see evil on Guðrun’s face. (52–65) Guðrun offers to store their weapons. Høgnar refuses to give his up. Guðrun asks if they remember anything about Sjúrdur, who they laid bloody in her lap. Guðrun relates how Sjúrdur was a better man. Høgnar thinks to himself that Guðrun is not in a good mood if she is taking up that topic. The table is set with beer. Guðrun once more asks them to discard their weapons, and Høgnar refuses. They drink mead and wine, but Guðrun is unhappy there is no conflict. (66–75) Guðrun coaxes her young son to silence Høgnar’s laughter and promises him gold. He punches Høgnar on the nose, even though he initially refused to do so. Blood runs from Høgnar’s nose and mouth, and he says he doesn’t thank the mother who raised the child like that. He runs his sword through the child, killing him, and throws the head on the floor so King Artala can see it. (76–95) Guðrun informs Artala that Høgnar has killed their child and that she will not rule Húnaland with him any longer if he doesn’t take revenge. Artala refuses since Høgnar is her brother and also points out that Gíslar and Jarnar had nothing to do with the death of Sjúrdur. Guðrun wants them both to pay for the death anyway and declares she will have them killed. Artala says it is not easy to kill Høgnar and asks her for a plot to kill her brothers. Guðrun tells him to take three skins and smear them with blood, then to attack her brothers (the implication being when they fall on the skins). She informs her brothers they shall walk on the skins. Høgnar tries to send Gíslar and Jarnar back to their mother, saying that he and Gunnar were responsible for slaying Sjúrdur. (96–107) Gíslar and Jarnar walked on the skins, and no one saw them get up (they have been killed). Gunnar walks on the skins and does not rise. Guðrun tells Høgnar she is

avenging Sjúrdur. Høgnar walks on the skins carrying his sword in the air and he doesn't fall. (108–15) Guðrun is angry because Høgnar is unharmed, and Høgnar says that before evening, they will be drinking blood like wine. Guðrun has 1200 men armoured, and Høgnar rides against them all, killing many of them. (116–28) In the morning, Guðrun comes out and finds Høgnar unharmed. She sends him into the forest to see wonders he slew in the past, and he does so. He sees a giant horse Guðrun has conjured up by witchcraft, bearing Sjúrdur. The apparition of Sjúrdur speaks to him and says that Høgnar did evil when he betrayed him, that both Brynhild and Guðrun had loved him, and therefore he had lost his life. Sjúrdur gives Høgnar a runic belt he got from the dead dwarf maiden and says he will now ride to the heathen forest. (130–36) Early in the morning, Guðrun has armoured 1200 men and Høgnar rides against them all, killing many of them, commenting that however many he kills, Guðrun brings them back to life during the night. (137–58) Guðrun has Tíðrikur Tatlarason brought to her and she says if he took Høgnar's life it would be a manly deed. He asks how he should fight against someone who no weapons can hurt, and that no one is Høgnar's equal now that Sjúrdur is dead. He states he will not win against Høgnar, and the queen goes grey. Guðrun promises to reward him with gold and property if he rides against him, and Tíðrikur responds that he will fly through the sky and see how it goes, turning into a dragon. Høgnar, who is fighting, sees the dragon flying above him. He throws his sword into the sky and it runs through Tíðrikur, who has the sword in his heart. The dragon spews down poison onto Høgnar, which burns him severely. The poison flows towards his heart, and he goes pale and is forced back to the walls of the hall. (159–77) Guðrun comes out early in the morning and is angry to see Høgnar, apparently standing unharmed leaning on the hall walls. Høgnar asks her if he can sleep during the night with Helvík the jarl's daughter, claiming he has not received a wound. Guðrun says he will be allowed this since he will be dead soon. Høgnar lies with Helvík and they conceive a son. Høgnar carves runes and they are read immediately. He says Helvík will have a son, she should call him Høgnar and that he will give him his sword, inherited from his father. The boy should also avenge his death. He also advises her on how to thwart Guðrun's plan to kill the baby by swapping him with Guðrun's baby. After twelve years, the child will recognize her. He gives her the runic belt and dies. They dress his corpse for burial, and he is buried in a mound.

The Second Ballad of Høgni or The Ballad of Aldrias (Annar Høgna táttur or Aldrias táttur)

(1–13) Guðrun and Helvík both give birth to boys. Helvík has the boy baptized as Høgnar, and Guðrun has her son called Sveinur. They sit inside for some days and then go out, Guðrun asking Helvík to go first. Helvík declines, saying she must go out first. Helvík switches their babies. Guðrun takes what she believes to be Helvík's child and cuts its throat. (14–15) Høgnar grows rapidly, and is fostered by the king of Húnaland. (16–28) Helvík rides to Lindará and meets her son there, and tells him she is his mother. He says she is lying, and at her invitation cuts her with a knife. This causes him such pain he believes that she is his mother, and she tells him he must avenge his father. She gives him a runestick that Høgnar gave him. In the runestick, he could see his father's death. She gives him the rune belt she got from Høgnar. She tells him that when he gets to the hall, no one must find him. (29–38) Early in the morning Høgnar wants to ride to the hall and he goes inside. The flame from a light burns through his foot, King Artala points out to him that his foot is burning and asks what he is thinking about. Høgnar answers that he is thinking that even though Artala possesses great riches, at some point in his life he may have to beg for water and bread. Artala says this will not happen. (39–51) Early in the morning, Høgnar invites Artala to ride to the forest, and they do so. They go to the gold cliff to examine the riches. Artala tells Sveinur (Høgnar) that he should go in first, but he says that since Artala is wearing a higher crown, he should go in first. Artala looks around the door, and Sveinur slams it shut, trapping him inside. He asks Artala whether he wants to beg for bread and water, and Artala does so. Høgnar gets a lot of gold and doesn't return until the king shrivels up and dies. (52–53) Høgnar stays the night with his mother and then rides to the king of Denmark. The narrator ends by saying many the woman is wretched, and Guðrun walks around the world holding Grani's reigns.

The Ballad of Gestur or The Ballad of Ásla (Gests ríma or Áslu ríma)

(1–3) Gestur goes to the river and finds a harp. He carries the harp on his back and stays the night at a farm where a maiden/hag lives. (4–6) The maiden/hag invites Gestur to stay with her for the night, saying Haki will be back from the forest soon, and since Gestur couldn't do anything else, he puts the harp by the fire. Haki comes back from the forest shortly afterwards. (7–9) The hag says to Haki that they shall kill Gestur that night, but Haki refuses saying he has no issue with him. She says she will kill him herself. (10–11) The hag goes up and kills Gestur. (12–14) The hag breaks up

the harp and finds a maiden dressed in red. The hag says the maiden shall have an easy life, be called Kráka and be her daughter. The maiden says she is not named Kráka. (15–23) Ragnar lands and his men go into Haki's courtyard with bread to be baked. A maiden comes in and out of the courtyard and they stare at her while the bread burns. The hag pours a brewing vessel over Kráka and tells her where to sit, Kráka refuses and the hag hits her. The men ask why she hits such a beautiful woman, and she replies she has killed people in the past. (24–34) The men tear out a piece of Kráka's hair and carry it to the ship. Ragnar asks why the food is spoiled, and they say they saw a very beautiful maiden, more beautiful than Tóra. Ragnar replies that if they are mocking him, they will all be going to the gallows. They show him the hair and he says to go and tell her that Ragnar wants to see her, which they do. (35–37) Ása is out walking and calls to her a little young dog.

The Ballad of Nornagestur (Nornagests ríma)

(1) The narrator announces that this is a ballad about Nornagestur. (2–6) Twelve oxen were led to a market and then to a castle, where they were killed by the king with a great blow that everyone praised. A lot of blood flowed. (7–8) The king asks the old man (Nornagestur) why he did not praise his blow, and the man replies that the king's blow was angry and he has seen more graceful ones in the past. (9–15) The king asks if he can tell the story of Sjúrdur. Nornagestur replies that he can, no one has seen such a man, leaf and grove shook when he chopped the dragon apart. Høgni was an honourable man although ugly. Gunnar was strong, powerful, wise and kind like Grimhild and it will be a long time before another like him is born. (16–19) Gunnar, Høgni and Sjúrdur rode home round the marsh, Gunnar and Høgni's horses both jumped over, but Grani (Sjúrdur's horse) got stuck in the fen. Nornagestur comments he has often trodden in the marsh himself. (20–25) All dismounted, and all pulled on their horses, Sjúrdur the most. He orders Nornagestur to clean his horse. They rode by a river and couldn't see each other. Nornagestur cleans the horse and Sjúrdur takes him as his squire. (26–28) They ride to Fávnir's lair where there is shining gold. The hair in the horse's tail is extremely long and sparkles like silver. (29–31) The king gave him weapons and a ship and told him the way. Nornagestur says that he spent his life scouting lands, and he has travelled extensively. (32–33) The courteous man dives down to lead,⁵ and Kørnar the priest baptizes Nornagestur, who dies as the candle burns out.

5 This seems to be a lead lantern at the bottom of the sea, in which his candle is kept.

Ísmal the Brave Hero (*Ísmal fræga kempa*)

(1–4) Ísmal tells Hermundur that they shall ride to the king’s court to ask for his daughter. He throws a cloak on and walks into the halls where Hjalprek sits at the table with five hundred men. (5–8) Ísmal stands on the hall floor with a silk-buttoned hat, red cheeks and blue eyes. He asks for the king’s daughter, and the king thinks about how he should give a mocking reply, saying that if Sjúrdur were to stand by Ísmal, he would be his equal. (9–12) Svanhild walks in and falls in love with Ísmal. The king thinks about how he should give a friendly reply. He tells Ísmal he will give him his daughter and a wedding feast as well. Svanhild and Ísmal are betrothed, he leaves then is sent for by the king. (13–23) Ísmal asks who will invite Sjúrdur to the wedding, the king tells him to invite him himself. Ísmal rides into the forest and meets Sjúrdur, who is not happy. Ísmal invites him to the wedding, and Sjúrdur asks him who he is betrothed to. Ísmal tells him it is his sister and Sjúrdur says that if he has been betrothed to her without his having been asked, he will beat him with clubs. Ísmal offers him another option, and Sjúrdur says Ísmal will have to complete some hard tasks. (24–30) Ísmal asks what the first task is, and Sjúrdur says in the forest there are dragons and Ísmal shall kill all of them before he can be married. Ísmal asks how big they are and Sjúrdur tells him, then Ísmal says he is not afraid. He kills all the dragons but has poison breathed on to him and doesn’t manage to leave. (31–37) Sjúrdur goes back to the court and Svanhild is waiting outside. He sits in the highseat and the castle shakes. He tells his father he wishes his neck was broken since he wasn’t asked about the betrothal. Svanhild asks whether he has contrived a plot that Ísmal should perform deeds. He tells her to leave since it wouldn’t be seemly to kill a woman. Svanhild begins to cry and Sjúrdur tells her to get out of his sight, although admits Ísmal was not a lesser man than he was. (38–41) Sjúrdur mounts his horse and goes back to the forest for his sister’s sake. Ísmal, lying on the field in danger from the dragons, is relieved to hear Grani approaching. Sjúrdur takes him into the saddle and, dreading his wounds, finds ointment to put on him. (42–46) Sjúrdur takes Ísmal home and gives him to Svanhild to heal. When he is healed, they have the wedding prepared and many people are invited, including the king of France. (47–50) Ísmal’s bridesmen are King Hjalprek and Gunnar. Svanhild’s bridesmaids include Gunnhild, Grimhild, Brynhild and Guðrun. Ørvaroddur played the harp and Hjálmar supported the maidens. (51–53) There are abundant newly made silver dishes, Sjúrdur stands on the hall floor and tells tales of bold heroes. Sjúrdur is upset by Brynhild’s conversation and breaks a mead cup on the table. (54–58) Everyone was

happy and the lady was escorted with candles and lanterns and an organ playing in the garden to sleep on the first night. Ísmal and his wife enter the same bed. (59–60) After a long wedding celebration with as many courtiers in attendance as there are feathers in a bird's wing, everyone went home. (61) The narrator ends the ballad.

Sjúrdur and the Dwarf Maiden or Dwarf Maiden I (Sjúrdur og Dvørgamoy or Dvørgamoy I)

(1–5) The narrator tells that he has known of a ballad for a long time. Hjalprekur rules a kingdom and of his many heroes, the foremost one is Sjúrdur. The narrator says he will now compose verses about Sjúrdur's first expedition when he rode out for the first time. (6–10) Early in the morning, Sjúrdur dresses himself and the horse, adorned in scarlet, is untied. Sjúrdur puts on his new armour and says that he wants to go into the forest and see marvels. (11–33) Sjúrdur rode into the forest for three days, unable to see or hear anything. On the fourth day, he sees a great fleet, and as he goes towards it, he sees a whole ring of dwarves in front of him. The dwarves ask if he has come to play and he doesn't dare to answer. The dwarves are annoyed, and he thinks to himself that he doesn't want to be killed and that they can choose the terms. The dwarves attack, and Sjúrdur gets punched in the nose so the blood flows down his armour. This incenses him and he kills a dwarf. Another dwarf exclaims that particular dwarf wasn't in their band and that if he takes down another, he will not be leaving. (34–38) The dwarves disappear and Sjúrdur walks in the dark. It is frosty and he is lost. The dwarf maiden, wise and sensible, comes to him, wearing clothes bordered with gold. He asks her to take him home to the hall. (39–46) She leads him to a castle on pillars, and he asks who lives there. She replies that it is her father's castle and that he should not respond to what her father says to him. Nor should he go into the smithy with him, because the father knows Sjúrdur is easy to goad. He should lie down on the floor in the hall; if he answers, he will lose his head. (47–59) Sjúrdur comes into the hall late in the evening, the dwarf is in his smithy. The dwarf sees a large horse tied up by the hall door, which incenses him. He asks what kind of warrior has arrived. The dwarf puts on his armour and gets his spear and asks for the guest to be brought in; his daughter explains Sjúrdur is in trouble and tired, and should not be harmed. The dwarf tells Sjúrdur to drink mead and wine and tells him to come into his smithy. As Sjúrdur rises to go, he remembers the dwarf maiden has told him not to answer. The dwarf says he will give him armour and a spear. (60–65) Early in the morning Sjúrdur dresses to

ride home. He tells the dwarf maiden to get him home to the hall. She is grief-stricken but says she will get him far enough to see Hjalprekur's castle. They part sorrowfully and kiss. The dwarf maiden turns back crying, and Sjúrdur goes home to King Hjalprekur.

The Beautiful Dwarf Maiden or Dwarf Maiden II (Dvørgamoygginn fagra or Dvørgamoy II)

(1–5) Ásmundur says he could not have the maiden that came here last night. Ásmundur rides out early in the morning. A king⁶ takes the dwarf maiden home with him and tells his men to invite guests to the wedding. They are to ride to Sjúrdur. The king comments he knows Ásmundur and his men. (6–11) The king's men ride out and Larsin the dwarf king arrives back to his hall, finding that sword, shield and the woman have all disappeared. Ásmundur asks him if he is not intending to take revenge on the king who has taken the maiden. The dwarf king says both his sword and shield are gone, and then Ásmundur says he will lend a sword and shield to the dwarf, and that he will also go on the journey himself to visit the king of the Huns. (12–19) They ride to the hall and find the king and the dwarf maiden playing chess. A man comes into the hall and tells him that an army is approaching the castle. The king arms himself and comments that Høgni and his troops are a long way away and that Sjúrdur and Virgar are not home. He asks his brother Gíslar to explain his intentions to the dwarf king and Ásmundur and to invite them to drink mead. He does so, and the dwarf king replies that he is dressed for battle and if the king does not hand the woman back, then he will have to defend himself. (20–27) Early in the morning they start their battles near the king's hall. Ásmundur rides to the army and the king comes towards him, strikes him and he falls off his horse. This was caused by the king's queen carving runes. Everyone sees him fall off and lose. The dwarf kills the whole army and takes the woman back. The king loses land but survives. (28–31) A man comes into the hall to tell the king that his brother Høgni and Sjúrdur are here. He welcomes Høgni by telling him that the army, land and the woman are all lost. Høgni replies he has been unable to find Virgar, who went to a foreign land to propose to a maiden. Sjúrdur answers they will ride to the cliff and find the dwarf king. (32–50) They ride to the cliff and Sjúrdur opens the door of the cavern with difficulty. The maiden sits at a table, the dwarf is in the smithy. The dwarf comments that often

6 Although the king this ballad features is not named, it must be King Gunnar, since Gíslar and Høgni are his brothers.

it is best to be a long way from men than to be their friends. Høgni replies that they are not friends and have come to avenge the damage inflicted on their brother. The dwarf arms himself and rides to a forest. Høgni lands a great blow on him but it didn't pierce his armour. They fought for twelve hours and Høgni begins to get tired and give ground, eventually falling off his horse. Early in the morning, Sjúrdur fastens his helmet on and gives a great blow, that also doesn't pierce the dwarf's armour. They fight for twelve hours, Sjúrdur begins to get tired, and the sword gets too heavy, so he throws three spears, none of which injure the dwarf. He hits the dwarf over the head with his sword, which also does not injure the dwarf. The dwarf hits Sjúrdur so hard it knocks his helmet off. Then the dwarf gives him such a blow that Sjúrdur's armour splits and Grani falls to his knees. Sjúrdur has planned this and now is able to split the shields and armour of the dwarf. Wounded, the dwarf gives Sjúrdur the victory. (51–53) Sjúrdur and Høgni ride to the dwarf's castle, where the maiden is alone sewing white linen. They take her and the gold. Sjúrdur puts her on the back of his horse and takes her back to the hall, the narrator says that now the ballad will end. (54–55) Sjúrdur does not take the maiden back to the king, but back to his own hall, telling Høgni to tell the king that the maiden is his reward. The maiden joins the women at his hall but doesn't want to. She had aided Ásmundur well when he needed it. (56–60) Høgni had a son with the same name, until he defeated Artala. He sailed into a harbour and lay there until the quarrel was avenged. After this, he was called Aldrias. Ásmundur Aldriansson ruled over Húnaland after Artan's death.

Ása the Dwarf Maiden or Dwarf Maiden III (Ása Dvørgamoy or Dvørgamoy III)

(1–8) Early in the morning, Sjúrdur dresses himself and gets ready to ride. He rides into the forest where he sees a golden hall open and the gold spills out. The hall is made of precious materials. Sjúrdur thinks to himself he shall go inside. He walks into the hall and a beautiful dwarf maiden is sitting before him. She says he is too highborn to stand and fetches him a chair. She says that many have asked for a lady's hand, but none can be compared to him. (9–10) She leads him into her hall, and says that he can see it is edged with gold and is spacious. (11–23) Sjúrdur wants to know who the two warriors are that ride in the forest, she says they are called Hálvdan and Eirikur, who are riding to Ásgarðar to test Óðin's heroes. She says the weather is bad in her land and it is better to fall in love with her in golden castles. Sjúrdur replies that he will not marry his property away on heathen lands. Ása the

dwarf maiden unlocks a chest and hands him clothes that none in his land have the skills to make. Sjúrdur says he will not bring heathen clothes back to his land. She gives him armour, and he says he will not bring heathen armour to his land. (24–26) She answers he should stay with her for the night and leave tomorrow. He says that he will not stay longer and will hurry on his way. He stays the night and conceives a child with the dwarf maiden. (27–37) Early in the morning Sjúrdur dresses himself and gets ready to ride. She asks when she can expect him to visit her. He promises to come in three months. Sjúrdur leaves the hall cheerful, but Grani has run away. He goes back into the mound, she lends him a horse and goes on the way with him. Sjúrdur is cheerful and finds Grani just outside the forest. (38–57) Sjúrdur was going to ride to the hall when a giant suddenly came down from the mountains. Sjúrdur has to turn back after the giant throws his spear into the field. Sjúrdur asks to go home, and they should meet another time. The giant says Sjúrdur won't make it one step further because he has slept with the dwarf maiden and not told him about it. The giant deals out heavy blows, sometimes Sjúrdur dodges and sometimes fights back. Grani comes running and things start to go better. Sjúrdur leaps into the saddle and says he shall now fight the mountain giant. They fight for two days and on the third day as the sun goes down, Sjúrdur chops the giant in two at the knee. The giant plants the stumps on the ground and continues fighting. Sjúrdur chops the giant in half again. (58–62) Sjúrdur is cheerful and rides home to the hall. Hjalprekur asks him where he has been for the evening and Sjúrdur says he fought a mountain giant. (63–67) Early in the morning, Sjúrdur dresses himself and gets ready to ride. He rides into the forest and sees the golden hall. He goes into the same mound as previously, and finds the dwarf maiden dead. He buried her in the mound and lays much gold with her. He also buries the beautiful baby girl. Then he rides back to the hall.

The Ballad of Kvørfinn or Dwarf Maiden V (Kvørfinns táttur or Dvørgamoy V)

(1–9) Tíðrikur sits in Brattingsborg, and the narrator says he will compose verses on the theme of dwarves. Tíðrikur wants to ride to the heathen forest and Virgar says he if goes, he will not come back. Tíðrikur's horse is untied while Virgar remains at home, until eventually he rides out to find Tíðrikur and catches up with him. (10–21) Tíðrikur orders that the horses shall rest and they shall walk into the forest. They sleep there and Virgar wakes to the sound of horses. He leaps on his horse's back, takes his sword and sees a might giant, who asks him why he rides in Birtingsškógur, his lord's land.

The giant is Sjúrdur, and he aims blows with his sword at Virgar and lands each one. Tíðrikur wakes, hears the swords and is afraid when Virgar is gone. Sjúrdur hacks with his sword Grammur so that sparks fly from Virgar's armour. Tíðrikur goes home, leaving his shield and sword behind. (22–34) Sjúrdur hacks until he is tired and sits on the field, both he and Virgar are unhappy. Virgar asks him what family he is from, and he says he is Sjúrdur and closest to King Hjalprekur in terms of gold, authority and ability. Virgar says that if Sjúrdur had had his sword, Mimaring, he would not have been able to withstand him. Sjúrdur recognizes Virgar and asks where Tíðrikur is. Virgar says that Tíðrikur is in the forest, and that they shall ride to Tíðrikur's home to gain more honour. Sjúrdur says no one dares to turn his horse away. The narrator says such arguments rarely end well. Sjúrdur says they shall ride through the forest and perform more great deeds. (35–41) Early in the morning, Sjúrdur and Virgar ride in heathen forests. (42–51) Dragons and wolves start to howl and a storm approaches. The riding conditions are bad. Giants are singing. Virgar becomes afraid and suggests they turn back. Sjúrdur advises him that that suggestion ought not to be known about at home. Sjúrdur says they shall ride through the forest. (52–66) They come to a house and Sjúrdur says they shall stay with the women there and continue the next day. Inside the house there are many beautiful swords and two maidens sitting at the table. Costly drink is on the table which Sjúrdur takes. Sjúrdur asks who rules the castle, and Virgar says if they don't answer they will be placed before swords. A dwarf maiden answers it is her father Kvørfinn who rules the castle and that he is away in the forest fighting giants to get ore from the crags. Virgar says they shall take the dwarf maidens back to the hall with them. (67–71) Virgar takes the two maidens on his horse and Sjúrdur takes the best sword the dwarf had made and snaps all the others. He takes as much gold and silver as the horse can carry and they depart. (72–77) Kvørfinn comes home and sees the swords and maidens are gone. He makes a new sword and swears to avenge the maidens. (78–84) Sjúrdur and Virgar go home and are greeted by Hjalprek outside the court. He asks who Virgar with the two maidens is, and he is identified by Sjúrdur. Hjalprek tells Virgar to go into the hall with his maidens. Virgar was tired and slept for three nights at Hjalprek's. (85–93) Early in the morning, Virgar dresses himself and embraces the maidens. He asks Hjalprek to lend him a ship to take the maidens over the sound and Hjalprek agrees. They sail, and Virgar has castles built in which to keep the two maidens. They should sit there and weave silk. Virgar went back to Tíðrikur.

The Giant of Hólmgarðar or The Mound Ghost (Risin í Hólmgørðum or Dysjadólgur)

(1–2) The narrator knows a ballad about Virgar, Sjúrdur and Nornagestur. (3–11) There are three paths, and one deviates from the others. Virgar goes to the mound where his grandfather lies. He asks his grandfather if he is awake and identifies himself. The grandfather refuses to leave the mound. Virgar asks him for Miming (a sword) and says he is breaking up the mound with his hands to get to it. The occupant within the mound (the mound-ghost) doesn't want the mound to be broken up so sends up the sword. Virgar asks him where medicines can be found. The mound-ghost says he knows of a lot of medicines, but that Virgar will not win them. He tells him about a house in Hólmgarðar full of medicine and says that he ought not leave Sjúrdur behind if he goes on the trip. (12–17) Virgar mounts his horse and goes to meet Sjúrdur. In the garden, he dons his cloak and goes before Sjúrdur, who is sitting next to Hjalprekur. Virgar tells Sjúrdur he knows of a lot of medicine if he is man enough to win it, and that he must equip himself. (18–23) Virgar and Sjúrdur ride from the hall with Nornagestur. They go to the hall, Vilkus the giant's son is standing outside and Sjúrdur asks if he has any medicine spare to sell him. The giant says he does not and asks who he is travelling with. Virgar is identified as the one who slew the giant. The giant thanks him for telling him and says he shall arm his company since he was the one who lost. (24–33) Early in the morning the giant had armoured his troops and Sjúrdur and Virgar ride against them. They fought for two full days and Virgar got tired, he fell backwards spreadeagled. Nornagestur saves him and takes him away. Sjúrdur fights heavily and splits the giant's army. Virgar is injured but gets up and continues to fight. They fight together until just the giant and one of his men are left. (34–36) The giant creeps to the castle gate and begs Sjúrdur for mercy. Sjúrdur says he can have mercy if he can hide himself. Virgar arrives and chops the giant in two. (37–40) Sjúrdur says he has won the medicine and Virgar should thank him. Virgar says Sjúrdur has won and should accept the medicine. Virgar takes the medicine away on two steeds and Sjúrdur ruled in Holmgarðar.

The Giant of Leittraberg (Risin av Leittrabergi)

(1–13) The narrator knows a ballad. There is a giant on Leittraberg that speaks with his heroes, wanting to know where his father's killer is, since he wants to avenge him. The leader of the men, Filkussonur, says he will not win against his father's killer. He is asked again and Filkussonur says it

was Sjúrdur. The giant of Leittraberg asks where Sjúrdur lives and is told he lives in Hólmgarðar in Norway. It is told he has killed many giants and that if the giant goes to Hólmgarðar, he will end up dead. The giant threatens to have Filkussonur burnt on a bonfire, who replies that if he does so he will never take Sjúrdur prisoner. Filkussonur dresses in new armour and says Sjúrdur will not be his prisoner. (14–22) The giant leaves and goes to forge himself a shield and sword. He has ships made and readied, with ropes made out of gold. He loads his ship with twenty barrels of gold. When he steps on his ship it goes under the water slightly, they set sail and don't stop before Norway. (23–32) A shepherd sitting on a hill sees the ships coming and goes into the king's hall, thinking he is wiser than they are. He tells that the giant of Leittraberg is coming to avenge his father and that he has seen a giant walking across the deck. Sjúrdur says that in his dream the night before that Grani stood saddled with a lot of blood before him, that his spear fell from his belt and that his sword rang out on armour. (33–40) The giant has the anchor lowered and is the first to go ashore, Filkussonur with him. They drag their ship ashore. Sjúrdur sends a man down to the beach to offer the giant peace, to sit at the table and drink mead, as long as they do no dirty tricks. (41–50) The messenger walks down to the beach to offer this, and the giant bites him in half at the waist. This is seen by Sjúrdur from the window, and he tells his men to arm themselves and not to fear the giant's large army. He fastens his helmet on tightly. (51–65) The giant puts his cloak on and goes into the hall where Sjúrdur sits by the table. Sjúrdur welcomes the giant and invites him to drink, but the giant refuses, saying he has received no reparations for his father. Sjúrdur says he will not be receiving any. The giant takes a swing at Sjúrdur, who dodges. The giant drags Sjúrdur by the hair, and Sjúrdur says no one has ever done that before. Sjúrdur leaps up, upends the tables, and brandishes his sword. There is chaos in the hall and Sjúrdur strikes the giant so he falls backwards out of the hall onto the field. The giant says he has come from Leittraberg and tells Sjúrdur to arm his troops and come out of the hall. (66–101) Early in the morning, Sjúrdur has equipped them and they battle close to the hall. Filkussonur kills every man who goes against him. Sjúrdur then tells Nornagestur to saddle Grani and he rides into battle felling the giant's men. He clashes with Filkussonur. Nothing harms Sjúrdur, but he hits Filkussonur so hard his head bursts in his helmet and he cuts him in two. Sjúrdur sees almost all of his army has been killed and it diminishes his former joy in the battle. He clashes with the giant of Leittraberg. The weapons of the giant break, and he goes back to his ship to get a shield and a sword. He can cover eighteen ells in one step on his way back from the ship, and he says to Sjúrdur that he will teach him how

to fight. Sjúrdur says it would have been better to be inside than fight with trolls. Nornagestur puts three new helmets on Sjúrdur's head, and the giant chops them off. Sjúrdur puts on a helmet he got from a dwarf maiden and now nothing can hurt him. They fight and Sjúrdur decides to use stratagems that he has seldom used. He turns and jousts. The giant is not injured on the first joust, but on the second he pierces the giant's heart and poison spurts into the sky and blocks out the sun. On the third joust he chops the giant apart at the knees. (102–7) Sjúrdur, now happy and cheerful, rides Grani back to the hall and tells Nornagestur to pour him a drink. After drinking, he complains about Grani, his horse. He goes down to the beach and gets twenty barrels of gold from the giant's ship. The narrator says he cannot sing more than what has been said in the ballad. Sjúrdur sits down in a chair and rules over Hólmgarðar now as before.