

Frithiof's Saga

Esaias Tegnér

Outline

- I. "Frithiof and Ingeborg." Frithiof and Ingeborg are fostered together and fall in love. Ingeborg is a king's daughter. Frithiof is a farmer's son, although his father is a Viking of great physical prowess and heroism.
- II. "King Bele and Thorsten Vikingsson." King Bele is the father of Helge, Halfdan, and Ingeborg. Thorsten Vikingsson is Frithiof's father. King Bele and Thorsten Vikingsson have been brothers in arms for a long time. They admonish their children to get along. They also tell where their grave mounds shall lie.
- III. "Frithiof's Inheritance." When his father is dead, Frithiof inherits his lands and treasures. The poem describes the vast lands and tells the stories of three special treasures: the sword, Angurvadel (a golden arm-ring made by Volund the Smith), and the ship Ellida (a gift from Odin).
- IV. "Frithiof's Wooing." Frithiof asks for Ingeborg's hand. He is refused and insulted by Helge because of his low birth.
- V. "King Ring." An old king asks for Ingeborg's hand. When the gods do not give their approval of the match, Helge and Halfdan insult King Ring's emissaries and provoke him to war. Ingeborg is put in the temple of Balder for safekeeping.
- VI. "Frithiof Plays Chess." Frithiof refuses to come to the aid of Helge and Halfdan when they are invaded by King Ring's forces.
- VII. "Frithiof's Joy." A poem in praise of Ingeborg. Frithiof goes to speak to Ingeborg in Balder's temple (something forbidden). They exchange rings.
- VIII. "The Parting." Poetic dialogue. Ingeborg wonders what is keeping Frithiof. Frithiof comes and tells of how he failed to win the support of the men at the Ting because he had broken the sanctity of Balder's temple by speaking to Ingeborg. Helge and Halfdan impose a penance on him: Frithiof is to collect a tribute from Jarl Angantyr from the Faroes. Frithiof tries to convince Ingeborg to run away with him. Ingeborg refuses, saying she must obey Helge since he is in her father's place. Frithiof grows angry, but in the end, agrees.
- IX. "Ingeborg's Lamentation." Ingeborg laments her fate at being left behind.
- *X. "Frithiof at Sea." King Helge summons a curse upon Frithiof's expedition and raises a storm.
- XI. "Frithiof with Angantyr." Atle challenges Frithiof when he arrives at Jarl Angantyr's. Frithiof bests him even though he is exhausted from the storm. Angantyr receives Frithiof and asks him to stay the winter. He pays him a tribute as a gift.
- XII. "Frithiof's Return." Frithiof returns to find that Helge has burned his lands and given

Ingeborg to King Ring. Frithiof is furious at both Helge and Ingeborg.

XIII. "Balder's Bale-Fire." Frithiof confronts Helge at a celebration for Balder. He throws Angantyr's money into his face so that he bleeds. Frithiof rips Ingeborg's golden ring from the Balder statue with such force that it topples into the fire, thus burning down the temple and the entire sacred grove.

XIV. "Frithiof Goeth into Banishment." Frithiof's latest offence was so serious that he is forced to go into exile. Helge is glad to see him go.

XV: "*Vikingabalk*." An account of the Viking rules that Frithiof lives by while in exile.

XVI. "Frithiof and Björn." Dialogue poem. Frithiof grows weary of living in exile and wants to go and seek out King Ring and Ingeborg. He assures his companion, Björn, that he means no harm.

XVII. "Frithiof Cometh to King Ring." Frithiof comes in disguise to the house of King Ring. Ingeborg's face shifts color when she sees him, but she says nothing. Ring invites Frithiof to stay the winter.

XVII. "The Ride over the Ice." When the King's sled breaks through the ice, Frithiof pulls it out of the water, horse and all.

XVI. "Frithiof's Temptation." While they are out hunting, King Ring pauses to sleep. Ring lays his head in Frithiof's lap. Frithiof fights the temptation to kill him in his sleep. King Ring says that he knows who Frithiof is and that he was only testing him.

XX. "The Death of King Ring." Frithiof comes to King Ring to take his leave. Ring gives Ingeborg to Frithiof and commits a heroic suicide.

XXI. "Ring's *Drápa*." A poem in praise of Ring written in an Old Norse meter. Note the amount of alliteration in the Swedish original.

XXII. "The King's Election." Frithiof is appointed regent until King Ring's son comes of age. He is called Jarl Frithiof and urged to wed Ingeborg.

XXIII. "Frithiof beside his Father's Grave." Frithiof asks his father's spirit what he should do and receives a vision. He must raise Balder's temple again and make peace.

XXIV. "Reconciliation." Frithiof builds a new temple to Balder. He learns that Helge has died fighting the Finns. He died when he tried to desecrate a Finnish temple. Halfdan and Frithiof reconcile. Frithiof and Ingeborg are to be wed.

X. "Frithiof at Sea"

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Now, King Helge stood
In fury on the strand,
And in embittered mood
Adjured the Storm-fiend's band.

Gloomy is the heaven growing,
Through desert skies the thunders roar.
In the deep the billows brewing
Cream with foam the surface o'er.
Lightnings cleave the storm-cloud, seeming
Blood-red gashes in its side;
And all the sea-birds, wildly screaming,
Fly the terrors of the tide.

"Storm is coming, comrades;
Its angry wings I hear
Flapping in the distance,
But fearless we may be.
Sit tranquil in the grove,
And fondly think on me,
Lovely in thy sorrow,
Beauteous Ingeborg."

Now two storm-fiends came
Against Ellida's side;
One was wind-cold Ham,
One was snowy Heyd.

Loose set they the tempest's pinions,
Down diving in ocean deep,
Billows, from unseen dominions,
To the god's abode they sweep.
All the powers of frightful death,
Astride upon the rapid wave,
Rise from the foaming depths beneath,
The bottomless, unfathomed grave.

"Fairer was our journey
Beneath the shining moon,
Over the mirrory ocean,
To Balder's sacred grove.
Warmer far shining moon,
Over the mirrory ocean,
To Balder's sacred grove.
Warmer far than here
Was Ingeborg's loving heart;
Whiter than the sea-foam
Heaved her gentle breast."
Now Solundar-oe

Ariseth from the foam
Calmer the sea doth grow
As near the port they come.

But for safety valiant Viking
Will not readily delay;
At the helm he stands, delighting
In the tempests stormy play.

Now the sheets more close belaying,
Swifter through the surge he cleaves
Westward, further westward flying
Lightly o'er the rapid waves.

"Yet longer do I find it sweet
To battle with the breeze,
Thunderstorm and Northman meet,
Exulting on the seas.
For shame might Ingeborg blush,
If her osprey flew,
Frightened by a storm-stroke,
Heavy-winged to land."

Now ocean fierce battles;
The wave-troughs deeper grow,
The whistling cordage rattles,
The planks creak loud below.

But though higher waves appearing
Seem like mountains to engage,
Brave Ellida, never fearing,
Mocks the angry ocean's rage.
Like a meteor, flashing brightness,
Darts she forth,
With dauntless breast,
Bounding, with a roebuck's lightness,
Over trough and over crest.

"Sweeter were the kisses
Of Ingeborg, in the grove,
Than here to taste in tempest
High-sprinkled, briny foam.
Better the royal daughter
Of Bele to embrace,
Than here, in anxious labor,
The tiller fast to hold."

Whirling cold and fast,
Snow-wreaths fill the sail;
Over deck and mast
Patters heavy hail.

The very stem they see no more,
So thick is darkness spread;

As gloom and horror hover o'er
The chamber of the dead.
Still to sink the sailor dashes
Implacable each angry wave;
Gray, as if bestrewn with ashes;
Yawns the endless, awful grave.

“For us in bed of ocean,
Azure pillows Ran prepares,
On thy pillow, Ingeborg,
Thou thinkest upon me.
Higher ply, my comrades,
Ellida's sturdy oars;
Good ship, heaven-fashioned,
Bear us on an hour.”

O'er the side apace
Now a sea hath leapt:
In an instant's space
Clear the deck is swept

From his arm now Frithiof hastens
To draw his ring, three marks in weight;
Like the morning sun it glistens,
The golden gift of Bele great.
With his sword in pieces cutting
The famous work of pigmies art,
Shares he quickly, none forgetting,
Unto every man a part.

“Gold is good possession
When one goes a-wooing;
Let none go empty-handed
Down to azure Ran.
Icy are her good possession
When one goes a-wooing;
Let none go empty-handed
Down to azure Ran.
Icy are her kisses,
Fickle her embraces
But we'll charm the sea-bride
With our ruddy gold.”

Fiercer than at first,
Again the storm attacks,
And the sails are burst,
And the rudder cracks.

O'er the ship half buried tearing,
Now the waves an entrance gain
At the pumps the crew, despairing,
Fail to drive them forth again.
Frithiof now no longer doubteth
That he Death hath got on board,
Still above the storm he shouteth,
Dauntless, with commanding word.

“Björn, come to the rudder;

Hold it tight as bear's hug;
Valhall's power sendeth
No such storm as this.
Now at work is magic:
Coward Helge singeth
Spells above the ocean:
I will mount to see.”

Like as martins fly,
Sped he up the mast,
And thence, seated high,
A glance around he cast.

A whale before Ellida gliding,
Like a loose island, seeth he,
And two base ocean demons riding,
Upon his back, the stormy sea.
Heyd, in snow-garb shining brightly
In semblance of an icy bear;
Ham, his loud wings flapping widely,
Like a storm-bird high in air.

“Now, Ellida, let us see
If in truth thou bearest
Valor in thine iron-fastened
Breast of bended oak.
Hearken to my calling,
If thou be heaven's daughter:
Up! and with thy keel of copper
Sting this magic whale.”

Now heed Ellida giveth
Unto her lord's behest
With a bound she cleaveth
Deep the monster's breast.

Forth a stream of blood hath bounded
Spouting upwards to the sky,
Diving down, the brute, deep-wounded,
Sinketh, bellowing, to die.
Together now two darts are cast,
Flung by Frithiof's arm so fierce:
Through the ice-bear one hath passed,
One the storm-bird's breast doth pierce.

“Well stricken, brave Ellida!
Not soon again, I wager,
Shall Helge's magic vessel
Rise on the gory wave.
Heyd and Ham no longer
Now bewitch the ocean
Full bitter is the biting
Of the purple steel.”

At once the storm-wind, leaving
The ocean calm and clear,
Still wafteth on its heaving

The ship to islands near.

And, all at once, the sun appearing,
Like a monarch in his hall,
New life and new delights seems hearing
To ship and wave, to hill and vale;
His silent radiance crowneth high
The lofty cliff, the forest's bound:
And all rejoicingly descry
The grassy shores of Efjesund.

“Pale Ingeborg's entreaties
Have risen to Valhalla—
Her knees my lily bended
Before the golden shrine.
The tears in her eyes so lovely,
The sighs of her swan-like bosom,
Have touched the hearts of immortals:
Now let us give them thanks.”

But Ellida's prow
Hath stricken with such force,

That slow she crawleth now,
A-weary of her course.

Weary, too, with dangerous sailing
Now are Frithiof's comrades bold,
E'en the swords they lean on,
Feeble forms erect to hold.
On sturdy shoulders Björn
Four from Ellida to the land;
But mighty Frithiof eight doth carry
Down to the fire upon the strand.

“Blush not, pale companions,
Waves are sturdy Vikings,
And bitter 'tis to battle
With the ocean maids.
See, the mead-horn cometh,
On feet of gold it circleth
Our limbs benumbed we'll warm again
With skoal for Ingeborg.”