

FÆREYINGA SAGA

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THORISDAL
DUNDEE
2016

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INTRODUCTION

Færeyinga saga (The Story of the Faroe Islanders) does not survive in manuscript as a separate work, only in scattered passages in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar hin mesta* and *Óláfs saga helga* (in *Heimskringla* and in the Separate saga). Some of the passages from *Færeyinga saga* in the *Flateyjarbók* version of these two sagas, however, have a fuller text of *Færeyinga saga*, and one probably closer than other manuscripts to the original saga, with fewer of the interpolations and alterations that are apparent in them. The conclusion of the saga is only found in *Flateyjarbók*.

The *Íslensk fornrit* edition of *Færeyinga saga* prints the relevant extracts from *Flateyjarbók* as the upper text, and those from *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* as the lower text, in chs 1–27; in chs 28–33 *Flateyjarbók* has basically the same text as other manuscripts of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, and the text is printed only from them; chs 34–42 are only extant in the *Flateyjarbók* version; chs 43–48 are only extant in *Óláfs saga helga*; chs 49 to the end are only extant in the *Flateyjarbók* version. The present translation is based on the upper text for chs 1–27, and the only text for the rest of the saga, as printed in Ólafur Halldórsson 2006.

The historical background in *Færeyinga saga* to the stories about the Faroe Islanders derives from the same sources as *Landnámabók*, *Egils saga* and *Heimskringla*. The detailed stories about Faroese characters are probably derived from oral stories from the Faroes. The author is rather vague and in some cases mistaken about details of the geography of the Faroes, and so is likely to have been an Icelander. The relationship with Icelandic histories suggests that he was writing in the first two decades of the thirteenth century. Although much of the narrative in *Færeyinga saga* is closely related to Norwegian history, the style, treatment and structure of the saga are closer to Sagas of Icelanders (Family Sagas) than to Kings' Sagas.

There are no verses in the saga, except for Þrándr's 'kredda' in ch. 57.¹ This is partly a rather muddled version of the widespread 'Four angels prayer' which is known in English as 'Matthew, Mark, Luke and John'. The saga-writer doubtless knew this from oral tradition in Iceland or the Faroes in his own time.

The fullest introduction and bibliography is that in Ólafur Halldórsson 2006. There is an excellent study of the saga in English in Peter Foote 1984.

¹ The word *kredda* (modern meaning: 'superstition, illogically held belief') is formed from Latin *credo* 'I believe' with the Icelandic hypocoristic doubling of the consonant, like *edda* from Latin *edo* 'I give forth (poetry)' (see *Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* (2010) under "Snorri Sturluson").

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FÆREYINGA SAGA

THE STORY OF THE FAROE ISLANDERS

CHAPTER ONE

THERE IS A MAN named Grímr kamban (the Lame). He was the first person to settle the Faroes. For in the time of Haraldr hinn hárfagri (the Fine-Haired), a large number of people fled in the face of his tyranny. Some settled in the Faroes and dwelt there, while some sought other unpopulated lands.

Auðr hin djúpauðga¹ sailed out to Iceland and called in at the Faroes and there gave Þorsteinn Red's daughter Ólof in marriage, and thence originated the greatest family line of the Faroe Islanders, which they call Gata-Chaps, who lived on Austrey.

CHAPTER TWO

THERE WAS A MAN called Þorbjörn. He was known as Gata-Chap. He lived on Austrey in the Faroes. His wife was called Guðrún. They had two sons. The elder was called Þorlákr, and the younger Þrándr. They were promising men. Þorlákr was both big and strong; Þrándr was also of the same build when he grew up, but there was a large difference in their ages. Þrándr had red hair and a freckled face, handsome to look at. Þorbjörn was a wealthy man and was then an old man when these events took place.

Þorlákr married there on the islands, but still lived with his father at Gata. And soon after Þorlákr was married, Þorbjörn Gata-Chap died, and he was buried in a mound and his funeral was carried out in the ancient style, for at that time all the Faroe Islanders were heathen. His sons divided up his wealth between themselves, and they both wanted to keep their home at Gata, for it was a most valuable property. They cast lots for it, and Þrándr won it.

Þorlákr begged Þrándr after the wealth had been divided that he might have the homestead, while he [Þrándr] should have more of the movable property, but Þrándr would not agree. Þorlákr then went away and got himself another dwelling there on the islands.

Þrándr rented out the land at Gata to many people and received the maximum amount of rent, so he took a passage on a ship in the summer, taking a small amount of money to trade with, and went to Norway and stayed in a market town for the winter, and always seemed in a dark mood. At that time Haraldr Grey-Cloak was ruling Norway.

The following summer Þrándr went with some merchant seamen south to Denmark, and reached Haleyrr during the summer. There were then the largest crowds there, and it is said that there come here to the Northern Lands the

¹ 'the Very Rich'. But often (e.g. in *Laxdæla saga*) called (*h*)in *djúpúðga* 'the Deep-Minded'.

greatest crowds while the market lasts. At this time King Haraldr Gormsson, who was known as Bluetooth, was ruling Denmark. King Haraldr was at Hælyrr during the summer, together with a large number of people accompanying him.

Two men of the king's following who were there with him at the time are named: one was called Sigurðr, and the other Hárekr. These brothers were always walking round the market wanting to buy themselves the best and largest gold ring that they could get. They came into a booth that had been extremely well set out. There was a man sitting in front of it and he welcomed them and asked what they wanted to buy. They said they wanted to buy a large and fine gold ring. He said there would be a good choice of them too. They ask him his name and he called himself Hólmgæirr the Wealthy. He now gets out his valuables and shows them a thick gold ring, and it was the finest valuable that could be, and he priced it so dear that they felt they could not be sure whether they would get hold of all the silver that he was asking straight away, and asked him to wait until the morrow, and he agreed to this. Now they went away without more ado, and the night passed.

And in the morning Sigurðr goes off out of their booth, and Hárekr remained behind. And a little later Sigurðr came in to the opening of the booth and spoke:

‘Brother Hárekr!’ he said, ‘give me quickly the purse that the silver which we put aside for the purchase of the ring is in, for now the bargain is made, but you wait here meanwhile and look after the booth here.’

So he gave him the silver out through the opening of the booth.

CHAPTER THREE

NOW A LITTLE LATER Sigurðr comes to his brother in the booth and spoke:

‘Get out the silver now; now the bargain is made.’

He answers: ‘I gave you the silver just now.’

‘No,’ says Sigurðr, ‘I have not touched it.’

So they argue about it. Afterwards they tell the king of it. The king now realises, as do other people, that they have been robbed of the money. Now the king imposes an embargo on sailing, so that no ships are to sail away as matters stand. Many people found this a great inconvenience, as it was, to hang about on as long as the market lasted.

Then the Northmen held a meeting among themselves about what to do. Þrándr was at this meeting and spoke as follows:

‘People here have no idea what to do.’

They ask him: ‘Do you know what to do?’

‘Indeed I do,’ he says.

‘Put forward your plan, then,’ they said.

‘That will not be without some payment,’ he says.

They ask what he wants for it. He answers:

‘Each of you shall give me an ounce of silver,’ he says.¹

They said that was a lot, but it came to be their bargain that each person gave him half an ounce straight away, and another half an ounce if this worked.

And the next day after that the king held a meeting and spoke as follows, that people should never be free to leave as long as it remained unknown how this theft had come about. Then a certain young man, whose hair had begun to grow after having been shaved off, his hair being red in colour, his face freckled and irregular in features, began to speak and spoke as follows:

‘People here rather seem to be very lacking in ideas about what to do,’ he says.

The king’s advisers ask what way forward he could see. He answers:

‘This is my suggestion, that each man that has come here should contribute as much silver as the king decides, and when this money has been collected together, then those who have suffered the loss should be compensated, while the king should keep what is left over for his trouble. I know that he will do his part properly in what he has to do, while people will not be stuck here weatherbound, such a crowd of people as are assembled here at such great inconvenience.’

This was immediately agreed to by the public, and they said they would willingly contribute money to the benefit of the king, rather than staying put there to their own inconvenience. So this plan was adopted, and this money was gathered together. It was a heap of money. And immediately after this a multitude of ships sailed away. The king then held an assembly and then this great amount of money was examined, and then the brothers were compensated for their loss from that money.

Then the king discussed with his men what should be done with that great heap of money. Then a certain man began to talk and spoke:

‘My lord,’ he said, ‘what do you think the one that suggested this procedure deserves?’ he says.

They now realise that it was this young man that had made the suggestion who was now there before the king. The King Haraldr said:

‘All this money shall now be divided in two. My men shall have one half, and then the other half shall be divided into two parts, and this young man shall have one share of this half, and I shall take care of the other.’

Þrándr thanked the king for this with fair and cheerful words. It was such a great heap of money that Þrándr got, that it could hardly be reckoned in marks. King Haraldr sailed away, and so did altogether the whole crowd that had been there.

¹ An ounce (*eyrir*) was one eighth of a *mork* (mark). In the tenth century an ounce of silver was about 25½ grams.

Þrándr went to Norway with the Norwegian traders that he had travelled there with, and they paid him the money that he had asked, and he bought himself there a trading ship, large and fine, loads onto it that pile of money that he had gained on this voyage. He now sails this ship to the Faroes, gets there safe and sound with all his money and now sets up a household at Gata in the spring, and he now had no lack of cash.

CHAPTER FOUR

THERE WAS A MAN called Hafgrímr; he lived on Suðrey in the Faroes. He was a powerful man, and hardy, well off for money. His wife was called Guðríðr, and she was Snæúlfr's daughter. Hafgrímr was leader of half the islands and held this half in fief from King Haraldr Greycloak, who was now ruling Norway. Hafgrímr was a very impetuous person in character, and not said to be a wise man. Einarr was the name of one member of his household, and he was known as Suðreyingr (of Suðrey). A second man was called Eldjárn kambhøttr (Crest-Hood) who was also there with Hafgrímr. He was talkative and abusive, foolish and malicious, sluggish and aggressive, deceitful and slanderous.

There are two brothers whose names are given in the story, and they lived on Skúfey; one was called Brestir, and the other Beinir. They were sons of one Sigmundr. Their father Sigmundr and Þrándr's father Þorbjörn Gata-Chap were brothers. The pair, Brestir and Beinir, were splendid men and were leaders of half the islands and held it in fief from Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson, who at this time held some power inland in Þrándheimr, and Brestir and his brother were followers of Jarl Hákon. and very dear friends of his. Brestir was the biggest of all men and the strongest and a better fighter than any man that was in the Faroes at that time. He was a handsome man, agile at all sports. Beinir was also similar to his brother in many respects, and yet not his match. They were not on good terms with Þrándr, though their kinship was close.

The brothers were not married. They had mistresses. Cecilia was the name of Brestir's mistress, and the one that went with Beinir was called Þóra. Brestir's son was called Sigmundr, and he was promising at an early age; Beinir's son was called Þórir, and he was two winters older than Sigmundr.

The brothers had another farm on Dímun, and that was a smaller establishment. The brothers' sons were then very young when this took place.

Hafgrímr's father-in-law Snæúlfr lived on Sandey, and he was a man of Hebridean origin and had fled from the Hebrides because of some killings and quarrelsomeness and to the Faroes. He had been on viking raids the earlier part of his life. He was at this time still quarrelsome and difficult to deal with.

CHAPTER FIVE

THERE WAS A MAN called Bjarni who lived on Svíney and was known as Svíney-Bjarni. He was truly a worthy farmer and had much wealth; a very cunning man. He was Pránder of Gata's uncle on the mother's side.

There was an assembly place of the Faroe Islanders on Straumsey, and there too is the harbour that they call Þórshöfn.

Hafgrímur, who lived on Suðrey at the farm that is known as at Hof, he was a great sacrificer, for at that time all the Faroes were heathen.

It came about one autumn at farmer Hafgrímur's on Suðrey, that they were sitting by singeing fires,¹ Einarr Suðreyingr and Eldjárn kambhöttur. They took up the game of Comparison of People;² Einarr supported those kinsmen of his, Brestir and Beinir, but Eldjárn supported Hafgrímur and claimed Hafgrímur to be superior. In the end Eldjárn leapt up and struck at Einarr with the piece of wood he was holding; it hit Einarr on the shoulder, and he was annoyed by it. Einarr got an axe and struck Kambhöttur on the head so that he lay unconscious, and it was cut open. And when Hafgrímur found out about this, he drove Einarr away and bade him now go to his kinsmen, the people of Skúfey, since after all, he had supported them.

'And it shall come about,' says Hafgrímur, 'whether it be sooner or later, that we and those people of Skúfey will grapple with each other.'

Einarr went away and came to the brothers and tells them about how it had gone. They welcomed him, and he was treated well there during the winter. Einarr asks his kinsman Brestir to take up his case, and he does so. Brestir was a sensible man and skilled in the law.

And during the winter Hafgrímur travels by ship to Skúfey and goes to see the brothers and asked how he was going to respond to the injury that Einarr had inflicted on Eldjárn kambhöttur. Brestir answers that they should submit this case to the judgment of the best men, so that a fair agreement might be reached. Hafgrímur answers:

'No agreement between us shall be reached unless I can be sole arbiter.'

Brestir answers: 'That will not be a fair agreement, and nothing can come of that.'

Then Hafgrímur summoned Einarr to the Straumsey Assembly, and they parted without more ado. Brestir had straightway given notice of the unprovoked assault that Kambhöttur had inflicted on Einarr when it had just happened.

Now both sides come to the Assembly and get lots of supporters. So when Hafgrímur approached the court and was going to present the case against

¹ Fires for singeing sheep's heads, preparing them for food.

² *Mannjofnuðr* was an entertainment particularly used at feasts, which typically ended in violence.

Einarr, then the brothers came up on the other side, Brestir and Beinir, with a great following, and Brestir quashed Hafgrímr's case and declared Kambhøttr outlaw in accordance with the ancient laws of the land, in that he had struck an innocent man, and he broke up the court for Hafgrímr, but they prosecuted Eldjárn to outlawry and complete loss of legal rights. Hafgrímr said that this would be avenged. Brestir declared he would wait for that in readiness, and was not worried by his threats. They now parted without more ado.

CHAPTER SIX

ALITTLE WHILE AFTER THIS Hafgrímr leaves his home, and six Amen with him, and his wife Guðríðr with him, and they have a single ship; they sailed to Sandey. His kinsman-in-law Snæúlfr, his wife Guðríðr's father, lived there. And when they get to the island, they saw nobody outside at the farm and nobody out on the island; they now go up to the farm and into the buildings and find no one there; they go to the living room, and a table was set up there and both food and drink on it, but they find no people. This seemed strange to them, and they stay there for the night.

So the next morning they set off and passed along the island. Then a ship rowed towards them the opposite way along the island, loaded with people, and they recognised there farmer Snæúlfr and all his household. Then Hafgrímr rowed up to them and greeted his father-in-law Snæúlfr, but he was silent. Then Hafgrímr asked what advice he could offer him in the affair between himself and Brestir, so that he could get redress. Snæúlfr replies:

'You have acted badly,' he says, 'you attack better men than yourself for no reason, and always get the worst of it.'

'I thought I needed more than just blame from you,' he says, 'and I shall not listen to you.'

Snæúlfr grabbed up a spear and shot it at Hafgrímr. Hafgrímr got his shield in front of himself, and the spear stuck fast in it, but he was not wounded. They part without more ado, and Hafgrímr goes back home to Suðrey, and was not pleased with his lot.

The couple, Hafgrímr and his wife Guðríðr, had a son who was called Qzurr; he was now nine winters old when these events took place, and the most promising person.

And now time passes. Hafgrímr sets out from home and to Austrey to Þrándr's, and Þrándr welcomes him. So now Hafgrímr seeks advice from Þrándr, what he would suggest he might do about his case with the men of Skúfey, Brestir and Beinir; said he was the cleverest man on the islands, and says he would willingly do something for him in return. Þrándr said this was a strange request, that he should want to involve himself in some trickery against his own kinsmen.

‘And yet you cannot be in earnest. I realise, too, that you are of such a nature that you would like to have other men in league with you, but are reluctant to do anything so that you can achieve some success.’

‘That is not the case,’ said Hafgrímr, ‘and I am willing to do a great deal so that you may be in league with me, so that I may take the lives of the brothers.’

Þrándr answers: ‘I will put you where you can get at the brothers,’ he said; ‘but you must do this for me in return, give me the price of two cows every spring and two hundreds¹ every autumn, and this debt shall be lifelong, and the same even after your day, and yet I am not prepared to do this unless more people are in league. I want you to go and see my uncle Bjarni on Svíney and get him in league with you.’

Hafgrímr agrees to this and travels from there to Svíney and goes to see Bjarni and asks him for exactly what Þrándr had proposed to him. Bjarni answers as follows, that he will not go into this unless he gets some profit out of it. Hafgrímr told him to say what he had in mind. Bjarni spoke:

‘Every spring you shall give me the price of three cows, and every autumn three hundreds worth of meat.’

Hafgrímr agrees to this and returns home without more ado.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NOW WE MUST TELL about the brothers, Brestir and Beinir. They had two households, one on Skúfey, and the other on Dímun. Brestir was married to a woman who was called Cecilia; she was Norwegian in origin. They had a son who was called Sigmundr, and he was now nine winters old when this took place, and was both big and manly-looking. Beinir had a mistress who was called Þóra, and a son by her who was called Þórir; he was now eleven winters old and most promising.

This is to be told that on one occasion when the brothers were at their residence, Brestir and Beinir, on Dímun, they went onto the island of Little Dímun; it is uninhabited. They let their sheep go there, and the cattle that they were intending for slaughter. The boys begged to go with them, Sigmundr and Þórir. The brothers left it up to them, and they now go to the island. The brothers now had all their weapons with them.

It is to be told about Brestir that he was both big and strong and better at using weapons than anyone, a sensible man and popular with all his friends. His brother Beinir was also very accomplished, and yet not to the same extent as his brother.

Now they went from the island of Little Dímun, and when they were making their way close to the inhabited island of Dímun, then they saw three ships coming towards them loaded with men and weapons, and there

¹ *Hundrað* was the value of 120 ells (120 × 46 cm) of homespun, or the price of a cow.

were twelve men on each ship. They recognised these men, and there were there Hafgrímr from Suðrey, and Þrándr from Gata on the second ship, Bjarni from Svíney on the third ship. They got between the brothers and the island and they could not reach their landing place and brought their ship up to the beach somewhere, where there was a kind of rock up above the brothers, and they leapt up onto it with their weapons, and the boys they put down there by them on the rock. The rock was wide on top and a good vantage point.

Now Hafgrímr and the others come up with the three ships, and straightway leap from the ships and up onto the beach to the rock, and the two of them, Hafgrímr and Svíneyar-Bjarni, straightway launch an attack on the brothers, but they defend themselves well and valiantly. Þrándr walked about along the beach with his crew and they were not in the attack. Brestir defended the rock where it was easier to attack and harder to defend. Now they fought with each other for a while, and there was no quick victory between them. Then Hafgrímr spoke:

‘I came to an agreement with you, Þrándr, that you would give me support, and it was for this I gave you my money,’ he said.

Þrándr answers: ‘You are the greater dastard, in that you are unable to defeat two men with two dozen men, and it is your way always to get others to shield you, and you hardly dare to come close when there is any danger around. The thing to do, if there is any pluck in you, would be for you to be the first to rush up at Brestir, and let others follow behind you; otherwise it seems to me you are worth nothing.’

And he egged him on now as hard as he could. And after this Hafgrímr leaps up onto the rock against Brestir and lunges at him with his spear and drives it at his middle and through him. And when Brestir realises that this is his death wound, then he steps into the stab and towards him, Hafgrímr, and strikes at him with his sword, and the blow strikes Hafgrímr’s left shoulder and split down his shoulder and his side so that his arm fell off, and Hafgrímr fell dead down off the rock, and Brestir down on top of him, and both of them lost their lives there.

Now they for their part attack Beinir, and he defends himself well, and the outcome was that Beinir lost his life there. People say that Brestir was the death of three men before he killed Hafgrímr, while Beinir was the death of two men.

So after these events, then Þrándr declared that the boys, Sigmundur and Þórir, should be killed. Bjarni answers:

‘They shall not be killed,’ he said.

Þrándr answers: ‘Yet we must take into account,’ he said, ‘that they will be the death of most of the men that are here if they get away.’

Bjarni answers: 'Even so they shall no more be killed than I,' he said.

'Anyway I was not in earnest,' said Þrándr. 'I wanted to try you out as to how you would respond to it. I shall now compensate the boys for my having been present at this confrontation, and offer them fostering.'

The boys sat on the rock and watched these goings on, and Þórir wept, but Sigmundr spoke:

'Let us not weep, cousin, but remember it the longer.'

So after that they went away, and Þrándr took the boys back to Gata, but Hafgrímr's body was conveyed to Suðrey and buried there in the ancient style, while their, Brestir and Beinir's, friends conveyed their bodies back to Skúfey and buried them there, again in the ancient style.

These events were reported all over the Faroes, and everyone lamented the brothers.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THAT SUMMER A SHIP came from Norway to the Faroes, and the master was called Hrafn, a Vík-dweller by origin, and he had an establishment in Túnberg. He was continually sailing to Hólmgarðr, and he was known as Hólmgarðr-farer. This ship put in at Þórshöfn.

So when they were all set to go, the traders, then it is to be told that one morning there came there Þrándr from Gata on a skiff, and he took Master Hrafn aside privately and said he had two budding slaves to sell him. He said he did not want to agree a bargain before he had seen them. Þrándr brought out there two boys with shaved heads in hooded cloaks of undyed cloth. They were handsome in appearance, but with faces swollen by grief. Hrafn spoke, when he saw the boys:

'Is it not so, Þrándr, that these boys are the sons of Brestir and Beinir whom you killed a short while ago?'

'I believe it is indeed so,' said Þrándr.

'They are going to be none of mine,' said Hrafn, 'if I have to give money for them.'

'Then we shall make a compromise like this,' said Þrándr, 'and take two marks of silver here that I will give you for you to take them away with you so that they never after come to the Faroes.'

He now pours the silver into his, the master's, lap, and the outcome is that he accepts the boys, and he now sails to sea as soon as he gets a fair wind and arrives there in Norway where he would have chosen, at Túnberg in the east, and he stays there over the winter and the boys with him and they are well treated.

CHAPTER NINE

IN THE SPRING he got his ship ready for a journey to the east,¹ and then asks the boys how they felt they were now situated. Sigmundr answers:

‘Well, compared with when we were under the control of Þrándr.’

Hrafn asks: ‘Do you both know what Þrándr and I spoke about together?’ he said.

‘We do indeed know,’ he said.

‘I think it best,’ said Hrafn, ‘that you both go wherever you want as far as I am concerned, and also then the silver that Þrándr handed over to me with you, I think it also will be best disposed of if you have it for your keep; and yet you will be pretty helpless in a country you do not know.’

Sigmundr thanked him and said he was acting well as far as their affairs had now come.

Now it is to be told about Þrándr, that he takes over control of the whole of the Faroes, and of the wealth and possessions that the brothers, his kinsmen Beinir and Brestir, have had, and he takes in the boy Qzurr Hafgrímsson and fostered him. Qzurr was now two winters old. Þrándr was now in sole control of the whole of the Faroes, and no one dared now to speak against him.

CHAPTER TEN

THAT SUMMER WHEN THE BROTHERS Brestir and Beinir were killed, there took place a change of ruler in Norway: Haraldr Greycloak was brought down from rule over the country, and Jarl Hákon came in his place, and then was at first a tributary jarl of King Haraldr Gormsson and held power subject to him. Now all the power of the sons of Gunnhildr was destroyed; some of them were killed, and some fled from the land.

Now it is to be told about the pair, Sigmundr and Þórir, that they are two winters in the Vík after Hrafn let them go free, and then the money is used up that Hrafn has given them, and Sigmundr is now twelve winters old, and Þórir fourteen winters. They hear about Jarl Hákon’s coming to power and now adopt this plan for themselves, to go and see him if they could bring it about; this seems to them their best chance of some benefit, since their fathers had been his followers. They now go from the Vík to Upplönd and that way from the east across Heiðmörk and north to Dofrafjall and get there at the very beginning of winter, and then they are caught in the snow and winter comes. Nevertheless, they make an attempt on the mountain when it is scarcely advisable, get lost and sleep outside for what amounts to many days without food, and then Þórir lay down and bids Sigmundr now look after himself and try to get off the mountain. He said that they should both get off it or else neither of them. And such was the difference of strength between

¹ i.e. across the Baltic.

them, that Sigmundr lays Þórir on his own back, and it now gets quite light in the sky. They now both became very tired; now they come across a sort of little depression in the mountain, and they now go along this, and eventually they detected the smell of smoke, and next they come across a farm and go in and find a living room. There were two women sitting there, one elderly and the other a young girl; they were both fair of face. They welcomed the boys and took off their clothes, and give them dry clothes in exchange. And soon they give them food to eat and after that they take them to sleep and make their beds nicely and say that they want them not to meet the farmer when he comes home, saying he was bad-tempered.

Next Sigmundr wakes to find that a man is coming in, large of build and in a reindeer-skin coat and he had a reindeer on his back. He put his nose up in the air and was frowning and asked what had arrived. The housewife said that two boys had come there, wretched creatures, frozen and very worn out, so that they are at the point of death. He answers:

‘The quickest way to get us known about is for you to take people into our house, and I have often told you this.’

‘I did not feel inclined,’ said the housewife, ‘to let such promising men die here on our doorstep.’

The farmer let them be, and they went to eat and after that to bed.

There were two beds in the sleeping chamber; the farmer and the housewife lay in one, and the farmer’s daughter in the other bed, but the boys were given somewhere to sleep elsewhere in the house. So in the morning the farmer was up early and spoke to the boys:

‘It looks to me as though those women want the two of you to rest here today, if you find it suitable.’

They said they would like that very much.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

NOW THE FARMER WAS OUT during the day and came home in the evening, and was right cheerful with Sigmundr and his cousin. But the second morning the farmer came to the boys and spoke:

‘Fate granted that you should turn up here at my farmstead. Now it seems to me advisable that you should stay here for the winter, if you find this more satisfactory. The women have quite taken to you, but you have travelled far out of your path, and it is a long way to habitations in all directions from here.’

Sigmundr and his cousin thank the farmer for his invitation, and say that they would very much like to stay there. The farmer gave orders that they should be well served by the housewife, and put their hands to whatever they needed.

‘But I shall be out every day seeking supplies for us, if it is possible.’

So they are there, the boys, and they are generously served, and the women treated them well, and they find it good to be there, but the farmer is out every day.

The buildings there were fine and strong, and well looked after. The farmer said his name was Úlfr, and his wife Ragnhildr, and their daughter Þuríðr: she was the most beautiful-looking woman, and imposing. They got on well together, Sigmundr and Þuríðr, and they were often talking together, and the farmer and the housewife made no comment on this.

So the winter passes and the first day of summer comes. Then farmer Úlfr came to talk to Sigmundr.

‘This is how it is,’ he says, ‘that you have been here with me this winter. Now if you have nothing better to do than to be here, then you shall be free to do so and see how you get on here. It may be that there are some further things in store for us together. But there is one thing that I will warn you about, that you do not enter the forest that lies north of the farm.’

They agreed to this and thanked farmer Úlfr for his invitation. and happily accepted that invitation.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THERE WAS A POND a little way away from the farm, and the farmer went up to it and taught them to swim. Then they went to shooting butts and learned shooting, and Sigmundr soon became expert in all Úlfr’s skills, so that he became the finest man of skills, both he and Þórir, though the latter did not come to be the match of Sigmundr. Úlfr was a big man and strong, and the cousins realised that he was the finest man of skills.

They had been there now for three winters, and Sigmundr was now fifteen winters old, and Þórir seventeen winters. Sigmundr was now a full-grown man as far as maturity was concerned, as were both of them, and yet Sigmundr was in every way the more advanced, though he was two winters younger.

So now it is on a certain occasion during the summer that Sigmundr spoke to Þórir:

‘What will happen, even if we go into this forest that is here north of the enclosure?’

Þórir answers: ‘I have no desire to see it,’ he says.

‘That is not my feeling,’ says Sigmundr, ‘and I shall go there.’

‘You will have to get your way,’ says Þórir, ‘but we will be breaking my foster-father’s command.’

So they went, and Sigmundr had a wood-axe in his hand; they come into the forest and into a beautiful clearing. And when they had not been there very long, then they hear a great crashing in the forest, and soon they saw a very large and fierce bear. It was a great forest bear, wolf-grey in colour.

They now run back to the path by which they had got there. The path was narrow and confined, and Þórir runs in front and Sigmundr behind. The beast now runs after them on the path, and so the path becomes crowded, and because of this the trees get broken. Sigmundr then turns suddenly out off the path between the trees and waits there until the beast comes level with him; then he strikes the beast right between its ears with both hands so that the axe sinks in, and the beast falls forwards and is dead, for it has no death throes. Þórir noticed this and spoke as follows:

‘It was granted to you to achieve this great deed, cousin,’ said Þórir, ‘and not to me, and moreover it is most likely that I am behind you in many ways.’

Sigmundr spoke: ‘Now we shall try if we can manage to get the beast upright.’

They do so and get it upright, bend over the trees so that it cannot fall over, push a stick in its mouth, and the beast then seems to be opening its mouth wide. Now after that they go back home. And when they get home, then their foster-father Úlfr is back home already out in the enclosure and was just setting out to look for them. He then puts on a frown and asks where they had been. Sigmundr answers:

‘Now it has gone badly, foster-father,’ he said. ‘We have gone against your advice and the bear has chased us.’

Úlfr answers: ‘It was only to have been expected that it would go thus, but I would prefer it that he did not chase you again, and yet this beast is such that I have not summoned up the confidence to mess with it, and even so we shall now have a try,’ he said.

Úlfr now turns inside and takes a spear in his hand and so runs to the forest, and Sigmundr and his cousin with him. Úlfr now sees the bear and straightway leaps at it and drives his spear into it, and so the bear falls. Úlfr now realises that the beast is already dead, and spoke:

‘You are both making a fool of me, but which of you has killed the beast?’

Þórir answers: ‘None of this is to be attributed to me, foster-father,’ he says, ‘and Sigmundr has killed the beast.’

‘This is a very great achievement,’ he says, ‘and there will be many of your exploits to come after this, Sigmundr,’ he said.

Now they go back home after this, and Úlfr valued Sigmundr still more from then on than before.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

NOW THE COUSINS are with Úlfr until Sigmundr is eighteen winters old and Þórir twenty. Sigmundr was now an extraordinary person in build and strength and every kind of ability; so it is easiest to say of him that he has come closest to Óláfr Tryggvason in all skills.

And now when the cousins have reached this point, then Sigmundr says to his foster-father Úlfr that he wishes to be on his way.

‘And it seems to me that our destiny will be unremarkable if we do not want to find out about other people.’

‘And that shall be as you wish,’ says Úlfr.

Now they had noticed this, that every autumn and every spring, while they were there, Úlfr was away seven nights or nearly so, and then brought home a great deal of stores, linen and clothes or other things that they needed to have. So Úlfr has them given clothes and sends them off in fine style. It is noticeable in the women that they found it very hard to part with them, and yet more so in the younger one. They now part, and they go off, and Úlfr goes along the road with them and accompanies them over Dofrafjall until they can see north over to Orkadalr. Then Úlfr sits down and says that he wants to rest. So they all sit down. Then spoke Úlfr:

‘Now I am curious to know whom I have fostered here and of what lineage you are, and where your native land is.’

They say now everything about their lives that is past. Úlfr grieves greatly about them. Then spoke Sigmundr:

‘Now I want you, foster-father,’ he says, ‘to tell us about your life, what has passed of it.’

‘And so it shall be, too,’ says Úlfr.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

‘**H**ERE I BEGIN MY STORY, then, that there was a farmer called Þórálfr who lived in Heiðmörk in Upplönd; he was an influential person and a steward of the kings of Upplönd. He was a married man, and his wife was named Iðunn and his daughter Ragnhildr, and she was the fairest of face of nearly all women.

‘Not far from there lived the farmer called Steingrím, a good farmer and well off for money. His wife was called Þóra. They had a son who was called Þorkell; he was a promising person, big and strong. It was Þorkell’s occupation when he was at home with his father, that each autumn when it began to get frosty and ice formed on lakes, then he set out into the forest and some of his fellows with him and hunted deer and was a very great archer. This was his occupation when it started to get dry and frosty, and because of this he was known as Þurrafrost (Dry-Frost).

‘On one occasion Þorkell came to talk to his father and said that he wants him to get him a wife, and to ask on his behalf for farmer Þórálfr’s daughter Ragnhildr. His father answers that he was aiming high, but yet it came to pass that the father and son go to farmer Þórálfr’s and broach their errand concerning Þorkell’s proposal for his daughter Ragnhildr. Þórálfr responds

coldly and says he had looked for a higher match for her than to someone like Þorkell, but says he would like to give a positive reply to everything because of the friendship between him and Steingrímur, but yet nothing would come of this. They parted without more ado and go back home.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

‘SHORTLY AFTER THIS Þorkell sets out from home at night with a second man, when he heard that Þórálfur is not at home and gone to his stewardship, Þorkell and his companion go in during the night and up to Ragnhildr’s bed and he takes her up in his arms and carries her out and takes her home with him. His father got angry at this and said he was taking up a stone beyond his strength and told him to carry her home quickly. He answers:

“I shall not do that.”

‘His father Steingrímur told him to go away then. So Þorkell did this, went away with Ragnhildr and lived out of doors in the woods. There were accompanying him there eleven men; they were his fellows and friends.

‘Now farmer Þórálfur comes home and finds out what has happened, and immediately gathers men round him and had a hundred [i.e. 120] men and goes to see farmer Steingrímur and tells him to deliver up his son and hand over his daughter to him. Steingrímur said they were not there. Þórálfur and his men searched there and did not find what they wanted. After that they went into the forest and looked for them and divided up into search parties, so there were now thirty men with Þórálfur.

‘Now it happened one day that Þórálfur sees twelve men in the forest, and the thirteenth was a woman, and they now feel sure and make their way towards them. Now Þorkell’s companions mention that people were rushing towards them. So they ask Þorkell what course they were to take. He answers:

“There is a knoll here a little way from us, and we shall all go to it. That is a good vantage point. We shall dig up stones there and put up a valiant defence.”

‘So now they go to the knoll and get ready for it there. Soon Þórálfur’s party arrive and straightway let weapons rain down on them, but Þorkell’s party defend themselves well and bravely. Their battle ends with twelve of Þórálfur’s men falling, and seven of Þorkell’s, while five of those that remained were wounded. Farmer Þórálfur was mortally wounded. So Þorkell flees into the forest and his companions with him, and there they are parted, and Ragnhildr is now left behind, and she is conveyed to the inhabited area with her father. And when Þórálfur reached habitation he dies of these wounds, and people say that it was Þorkell that killed him. News of these events now spread. Þorkell goes home to his father, and he is little wounded, though most of his companions are more so. They are now healed.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

‘AFTER THIS THE PEOPLE of Upplönd summon an assembly, and Þorkell þurrafrost is made outlaw at the assembly. And when father and son learn this, then Steingrímur says that Þorkell cannot stay at home there while they are searching for him hardest.

‘“You must go, son, to the river that falls a short way from the farm here, but there is a great ravine there up along the river, and in its side is a cave, and no one but I knows of this hiding place. You must go there and take food with you.”

‘This is what Þorkell does, he stays in the cave while the searches are hottest, and he does not get found. He finds it dull there, and as time passes he goes away from the cave and to the farm that farmer Þórálfr had had, and now takes Ragnhildr away a second time and makes his way now into mountains and desert places. And here I am calling a halt,’ he said, ‘where I have now established my abode, and here I have been ever since, with Ragnhildr, for eighteen winters, and that is the age of my daughter Þuríðr. Now I have told you the story of my life,’ he says.

‘I find your story very impressive, foster-father,’ says Sigmundur; ‘but now I wish to tell you that I have ill rewarded you for your kindness and fostering, because your daughter told me when we parted that she was with child, and there is no one there can be responsible except me, and the principal reason for my going away was that this would cause a difference between the two of us.’

Þorkell answers: ‘I have known for a long time about this, that there was affection between the two of you, and I did not want to hinder it for you.’

Sigmundur spoke: ‘I want to beg you, my foster-father, not to give your daughter Þuríðr in marriage, for it is she that I shall have, or else no wife at all.’

Þorkell answers: ‘My daughter cannot be married to a better man, but I want to ask you, Sigmundur, that if you achieve success among leading men, that you remember my name and bring me into good standing and reconciliation with my fellow countrymen, for I am getting very tired of being in this wilderness.’

Sigmundur agreed to do this, if he could manage to bring it about. And now they part, and the cousins went on until they come to Hlaðir to Jarl Hákon. He had a residence there. Now they go before the jarl and greet him, and he welcomed them and asks what manner of men they may be. Sigmundur says he is son of the Brestir ‘who was your steward for a time in the Færoes and was slain there. The reason I have come, lord, to see you is that I was hoping for some good advancement from you, and I was wanting, lord, to enter your service, I and my cousin as well.’

Jarl Hákon said he could not tell for sure what man he was.

‘But you are not unlike Brestir, but you will have to prove your descent yourself, but I will not grudge you food.’

And he directed them to a place among his guests.¹ And Sveinn Hákonarson was young and in his father’s following at that time.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

SIGMUNDR GOT HIMSELF into conversation with the jarl’s son Sveinn and displayed to him many gymnastic feats, and the jarl’s son got much entertainment from him. Sigmundr put his suit before Sveinn and asked him to suggest to him some way for him to get some advancement from his father. Sveinn asked him what he was wanting.

‘Most of all I would like to go raiding,’ said Sigmundr, ‘if your father will support me.’

‘That is well considered,’ said Sveinn.

So the winter passes on till Yule. And at Yule, Jarl Eirekr Hákonarson arrives there from the Vík in the east. He had a residence there. Sigmundr gets into conversation with Jarl Eirekr and puts his problem before him. Jarl Eirekr promises him his help with his father Hákon, and says he will not contribute less for him than Jarl Hákon. So after Yule Sigmundr raises with Jarl Hákon the question of whether he would support him in some way or other, and let him profit by his father Brestir, since he had been in his service. Jarl Hákon answers:

‘I did indeed suffer the loss of a good supporter there when my follower Brestir was killed, a most valiant man, and those who killed him should be deserving of serious retribution, but what are you asking for?’

Sigmundr says what he most wants is to go on raids and so get either some success or death. The jarl said that was well spoken,

‘And you will know in the spring, when people are preparing for their expeditions, how I shall then arrange things.’

So the winter passes by, and then Sigmundr claims fulfilment of Jarl Hákon’s kind words, and the jarl answers:

‘I will provide you with one longship and forty men with weapons on it, and this troop will not be very choice, as most will not be keen on following you, a foreign person and unknown.’

Sigmundr thanked the jarl and tells Eirekr his father’s offer. The jarl answers:

‘A small contribution, and yet there may be some benefit to you in it. But I will provide you with a second ship and forty men on it.’

And this ship that Eirekr gave him was in every way well fitted out. Now he tells Sveinn what the father and son’s contributions were. Sveinn answers:

¹ *Gestir* (at any rate in later times) were royal retainers of inferior rank.

‘As things are, offers are not so easy for me to make to my friends as for this father and son, and even so I shall give you a third ship and forty men on it, and these shall be my followers, and I expect that they will follow you best of all the men that you have been given for your following.’

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SIGMUNDR NOW GETS READY to join his men and sails as soon as he is ready east to the Vík and so to Denmark and through Eyrarsund, and he travels right into the Eystrasalt during the summer, and finds little booty. He dares to go nowhere where there is much opposition with the force he has. Yet he lets traders pass in peace. But he travels westwards towards the end of summer until he comes off Elfarsker; it is always a great haunt of vikings there. And when they have put into an anchorage under an islet, then Sigmundr goes ashore onto the rock and is going to look around. He sees that on the other side under the islet five ships are lying, and the fifth one was a dragon ship. He then goes back to his men and tells them that five viking ships are lying on the other side under the rock.

‘Now I shall tell you this, that I am not disposed to avoid meeting them entirely without trying. Moreover, we will never get anywhere unless we take some risks.’

They bade him tell them what to do.

‘We shall now carry stones onto the ships,’ said Sigmundr, ‘and prepare ourselves as seems to us most promising. We shall place our ships at the outer part of the creek which we have now come into, for the creek is narrowest there, and it looked to me this evening, when we sailed in, that the ships would not be able to get in alongside us if we place our three ships side by side, and we may be all right if they cannot get at us from all sides.’

This is what they do. And in the morning when they have placed their ships in the outer part of the creek, then there row at them there vikings on five ships, and a man is standing at the prow of the dragon ship, big and strong, and he straightway asks who is in charge of the ships. Sigmundr gave his name and asks him his name. He says he is called Randverr, and born of a family from Hólmgarðr in the east, and said they had two choices: that they should give their ships and themselves up into his power, or otherwise defend themselves. Sigmundr said these choices were not of equal value, and said that they would have to make trial of their weapons first. Randverr told his men to attack them on three ships, for he could not get at them with them all, but he wanted to see first how it went. Sigmundr was captain of the ship that the jarl’s son Sveinn had given him, and Þórir the one that had belonged to Jarl Eirekr. Now they launch their attack and fight. To begin with, Sigmundr and his men let fly with stones so hard that the others can

do nothing else but shield themselves, and when the stones are gone, they send a heavy shower of weapons, and a large number of vikings fall, and a multitude are wounded. Now Sigmundr and his men take up their cutting weapons. Then the battle begins to turn against Randverr's troops. And when he sees his men's difficulties, he declared they were complete wretches, when they were unable to defeat the men that he declared would never become real men. They declared that he was always egging them on but sparing himself. They told him to launch an attack now. He said so it should be. Now he brings forward the dragon ship and a second ship on which the men were rested, and manned a third ship with men that were not wounded. They attack now a second time and fight, and the battle is now much fiercer than before. Sigmundr was the foremost of his men on his ship and strikes both hard and often. His cousin Þórir goes forward bravely. They now fight for a long time so that one cannot distinguish which side was getting the better of it. Then Sigmundr spoke to his men:

‘We will not defeat them finally unless we push ourselves harder. Now I shall attempt to board the dragon ship, so support me bravely.’

Now Sigmundr gets up on the dragon ship and eleven with him, and he kills a man, and soon another, and they support him well. Þórir gets onto the dragon ship too with four men. Everything gives way before them. And when Randverr sees this, he leaps forward and towards Sigmundr, and they fight for a very long time. Now Sigmundr demonstrates his skill and throws his sword [and shield], flings them up in the air and catches the sword in his left hand and his shield in his right hand and strikes with the sword at Randverr and takes off his right leg below the knee. Randverr then falls. Sigmundr deals him a blow on the neck that took off his head. Then Sigmundr's men shout a war-cry, and after that the vikings flee on three ships, and Sigmundr and his men clear the dragon ship, so that they kill every mother's child that was on it.

Now they review their troop, and thirty men are fallen of Sigmundr's troop; they put their ships in an anchorage and dress their wounds and rest there for some nights. Next Sigmundr takes charge of the dragon ship and the other ship that was left behind. They take a great deal of goods there, both in weapons and other valuables. Next they sail away and to Denmark and so north to the Vík and go to see Jarl Eirekr, and he welcomes Sigmundr and invites him to stay with him. Sigmundr thanks the jarl for the offer, but says that first he must go north to Jarl Hákon, but left there two of his ships in the jarl's keeping, for which they had only small crews.

Now they come to Jarl Hákon, and he welcomes Sigmundr and his fellows, and Sigmundr stays with the jarl for the winter and becomes a very renowned person. And at Yule in the winter Sigmundr becomes a follower of Jarl Hákon, he and Þórir as well, and they stayed put now in fine hospitality.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

AT THIS TIME there ruled over Sweden King Eirekr hinn sigrsæli (the Victorious), son of Björn, son of Eirekr, son of Eyvindr. He was a great king. One winter a group of twelve Norwegian traders had travelled east across Kjöf to Sweden. And when they came into the realm of the Svíar they held a market with the people of the country, and there was an argument at the market, and a Norwegian man killed a certain Swedish man. So when King Eirekr learns this he sends his guests¹ and has these twelve men killed.

And now in the spring Jarl Hákon asks where Sigmundr is planning to make for in the summer. Sigmundr said that this should be at his discretion. Jarl Hákon spoke:

‘I would like you to go somewhat close to the realm of the king of the Svíar and leave a remembrance with the Svíar of how they killed twelve of my men last winter for little cause, and no vengeance has been taken for it.’

Sigmundr said he would do so if it turned out to be possible. Jarl Hákon now provided Sigmundr with a troop of picked men from his following, some of them levied. They were all eager to go with Sigmundr. They now make their way east to the Vík and go to see Jarl Eirekr, and he provides Sigmundr with more fine troops, and Sigmundr now has a good three hundred men and five well fitted out ships. From there they sail south to Denmark, and so to the east of the realm of the Svíar. They take their ships in to land there in Sweden, on the east of the country. Sigmundr then says to his men:

‘Here we shall make a landing, and we must go in warlike manner.’

They now go up ashore and come into a settlement with three hundred people and kill people but take animals, burn farms. The people of the country take to flight away into woods and forests, those that got away. Not far off from where they were pursuing the rout there was in charge one of King Eirekr’s stewards who was called Björn; he gathers troops round him, when he hears about the raid, and comes to have a large force, and gets between them and their ships. And one day they see the land troops. Then Sigmundr’s men discuss what plan they should adopt.

‘There are still many good ones available,’ said Sigmundr, ‘and very often they do not win so easily that are in greater numbers, if the men opposing them are sharp. Now we shall adopt this plan, to draw up our lines and use a wedge-shaped formation. I and cousin Þórir will be foremost, and then three and five, while men with shields shall be out on the wings both sides, and I intend our plan should be that we should run at their battle line and see that in this way we break through, and the Svíar will not be firm on their feet.’

¹ See the note in ch. 16 above.

They do this, run now at the Svíar's battle line and get through. There is now a great battle, and many men of the Svíar fall. Sigmundr now goes forward hard and now strikes on both sides and comes to Björn's standard-bearer and strikes him a death blow. Then he urges his men that they should break down the shield wall that had been erected round Björn, and they do so. Sigmundr gets to Björn and they have an exchange of blows, and Sigmundr soon defeats him and becomes his slayer. The vikings now raise a shout of triumph, and the people of the country flee. Sigmundr says that they should not pursue the rout, said that they did not have the might for that in an unknown country. They do so, take a great deal of goods and go with that to their ships. They now sail away from Sweden and east to Hólmgarðr and raid there round islands and headlands.

Two brothers are named in the realm of the king of the Svíar; one was called Vandill, and the other Aðill. They were the king of the Svíar's border defenders and they had never fewer than eight ships and two dragon ships. The king of the Svíar hears news of these events, that a raid was made in his land, and he sends word to the brothers and bids them take Sigmundr's life and his fellows. They agreed to this. And in the autumn Sigmundr and his men sail westwards and come under a certain island that lies off Sweden. Then Sigmundr says to his men:

'We are not now come among friends in the case of these Svíar. We must keep a lookout, and I shall go up on the island and have a look round.'

And he does so, and sees that on the other side of the island there are ten ships lying, two dragon ships and eight others. Sigmundr now told his men, saying that they should make preparations and carry their valuables off the ships, and carry stones in their place, and they now prepare themselves during the night.

CHAPTER TWENTY

AND IN THE MORNING early they row towards them on ten ships, and these leaders shout [to know] who was in charge of the ships. Sigmundr said who he was, and when they know who these men are, then there was no need to ask about reasons: they get out their weapons and fight, and Sigmundr and his men have never found themselves where they had been so hard put to it. Vandill now attacks Sigmundr's dragon ship with his own dragon ship. He found there fierce resistance, and when they had fought each other for a while, then Sigmundr said to his men:

'It is again as it as before, that we will not gain victory unless we get to closer quarters. Now I am going to leap up onto the dragon ship, but you must back me up properly.'

So now Sigmundr leaps onto the dragon ship, and a great company of men follow him. He is soon the death of one man, and another. Now the crew

gives way before them. Vandill now advances towards Sigmundr and they now exchange blows for a very long time. Sigmundr uses the same trick as before: he switches his weapons from one hand to the other and strikes at Vandill with his left hand, taking off his right hand, and the sword he had been fighting with fell down. Sigmundr now quickly makes an end of him and kills him. Then Sigmundr's men raise a shout of triumph. Aðill spoke then:

‘Now a turning point has been reached, and Vandill must now be dead, so let us take to flight. Now it must be each man for himself.’

Now Aðill's side flee on five ships, while four are left, and a dragon ship the fifth, and they kill every mother's son that was left while he [Sigmundr] took the dragon ship and the others. So they go on until they get into the king of the Danes' realm. They feel themselves now preserved and saved. They now rest and bind up their wounds. And when they are fully recovered, they sail until they reach the Vík and go to see Jarl Eirekr, and they are welcomed there. They stay a short time there and travel north to Þrándheimr and come to see Jarl Hákon. He welcomes Sigmundr and his men and thanks him for these deeds that he had done during the summer. The cousins stay with the jarl over the winter, Sigmundr and Þórir, and some of their following with them, but their troops were boarded elsewhere. There is now no shortage of wealth.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AND WHEN SPRING CAME, Jarl Hákon asks Sigmundr where he planned to raid over the summer. Sigmundr said that this should be at his discretion.

‘I shall not egg you into going to tease the Svíar; I now want you to go west across the sea into the vicinity of Orkney. There you are likely to find the person that is known as Haraldr Iron-Skull. He is my outlaw and greatest possible enemy and has committed many crimes in Norway. He is a person of great power. Him I want you to kill, if you can bring it about.’

Sigmundr says he will go and see him if he hears of him. So Sigmundr sails eight ships out of Norway, and Þórir now captains the dragon ship Vandill's Bequest, and Sigmundr Randverr's Bequest. They now sail west over the sea and there is little in the way of booty during the summer. And towards the end of summer they bring their ships under Qngulsey; it lies in England's Sea. There they find ten ships lying before them, and there was with them one great dragon ship. Sigmundr soon finds out that in charge of these ships was Haraldr Iron-Skull. They settle for a battle between themselves on the morrow.

So the night passes, and in the morning, at sunrise they get out their weapons and fight all that day till nightfall; they separate at dusk and settle

for a battle between themselves on the morrow. And the next morning that follows Haraldr calls out to Sigmundr's ship and asked whether he wanted to fight on. He said he had nothing else in mind.

'This I will now propose,' he says, 'which I have not proposed before, that I would like us to become partners, and fight no longer.'

Men on both sides supported this and declared it was essential for them to make it up and be all united, and few would be able to withstand them. Sigmundr said there was one thing stood in the way of them being reconciled.

'What is that?' says Haraldr.

Sigmundr answers: 'Jarl Hákon has sent me for your head.'

'I expected nothing but evil from him,' says Haraldr, 'and you two are quite different kinds of people, for you are the most valiant person, but Hákon is the worst sort of man.'

'We are not going to see eye to eye on that,' says Sigmundr.

Now their men became involved in reconciling them, and it comes about that they unite and combine all their booty and go raiding now far and wide during the summer, and now few oppose them. But when autumn comes, Sigmundr said that he wants to make for Norway. Haraldr answers:

'Then we shall part company.'

'Not so,' said Sigmundr; 'I want us both to go to Norway. I shall then have done something of what I promised Jarl Hákon, if I bring you to meet him.'

'Why should I go to meet my worst enemy?'

'Let me have my way in this,' says Sigmundr.

'It is both that I trust you well,' said Haraldr, 'and also that you would otherwise be in a spot, so you shall have your way.'

Then afterwards they sail north to Norway and reach Hjørðaland. Then they are told that Jarl Hákon was in Norðmœrr and was in Borgund. They make their way there and lay their ships in Steinavágr. Then Sigmundr goes in to Borgund with twelve men in a rowing boat, wanting to see Jarl Hákon first, while Harald lies in Steinavágr in the meantime. So Sigmundr comes to see Jarl Hákon, and he is sitting at the drinking table. Sigmundr goes straight in before the jarl and greets him politely. The jarl received him kindly and asks him his news and bade a seat be brought for him, and this was done. They talk for a while, and Sigmundr tells him of his travels, but does not mention that he has met Iron-Skull. So when Hákon feels the story is being put off, then the jarl asks whether he has met Haraldr.

'So I did, indeed,' said Sigmundr, and told him how it had gone, that they had come to terms. The jarl then fell silent and went red in the face and spoke after a while:

'On other occasions, you, Sigmundr, have fulfilled my business better than now.'

‘The man is now come here, lord,’ says Sigmundr, ‘into your power, and I am intending that you shall accept atonement from Haraldr at my request, so that he may receive mercy for life and limb and freedom to live in the country.’

‘That is not how it will go,’ said the jarl; ‘I shall have him killed as soon as I get hold of him.’

‘I will offer my pledge for him, lord,’ said Sigmundr, ‘and as much money as the most you may be pleased to assess.’

‘He will get no reconciliation from me,’ said the jarl.

Sigmundr answers: ‘To small, and to no good, purpose have I served you, when I shall not obtain mercy and reconciliation for just one person. I shall go away from this land and serve you no longer, and I would like it if you have some trouble getting hold of him before he is killed.’

Sigmundr springs up and goes out of the room, but the jarl stays sitting there and is silent, and no one dares to put in a word for Sigmundr. Then the jarl begins to speak:

‘Angry was Sigmundr just now,’ he said, ‘and it will be a loss to my realm if he decides to leave, so he will not be serious about this.’

‘He will indeed be serious about this,’ said his men.

‘Go then after him,’ said the jarl, ‘and we shall come to an agreement about what he was asking.’

So the jarl’s men go to Sigmundr and tell him this, and so Sigmundr goes to the jarl, and the jarl is the first to speak and welcomes him and said that they were to come to an agreement about what he was asking before.

‘I will not have you go away from me.’

Sigmundr then accepted mercy and this atonement from Jarl Hákon on behalf of Haraldr, so Sigmundr goes to see Haraldr and tells him now how things are, that the settlement is agreed. Haraldr said it was a bad thing to trust him, but yet they went to see the jarl and agreement was reached on this. Then after that Haraldr went north to Hálogaland, but Sigmundr stayed with the jarl over the winter in great friendship, and cousin Þórir as well, and a great company of men with them. Sigmundr maintained his men well, both in clothes and weapons.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

NOW IT IS TO BE TOLD about the Faroe Islanders that Qzurr Hafgrímsson grows up with Þrándr at Gata until he is a full-grown man, and he is a brave-looking man in appearance and imposing. Þrándr arranges a match for him there on the islands with the finest farmer’s daughter, and then Þrándr said that they should divide the islands in halves for authority and government, and Qzurr should have the half his father had had, and

Þrándr the half that the brothers Brestir and Beinir had had. Þrándr also told Qzurr that he thinks it most proper that he should take all the wealth, land and movable property, that the brothers had had, and should have that as compensation for his father. So this all went as Þrándr proposed. Qzurr now had two residences or three: one on Suðrey, a second on Skúfey, a third on Dímun in the patrimony of the cousins Sigmundr and Þórir.

The Faroe Islanders had heard about Sigmundr, that he is a famous man, and they made great preparations. Qzurr had a fortification built around the farm on Skúfey and mostly stayed there.

Skúfey is so formed that it is so steep-sided that it makes a very good stronghold; there is one way up, and they say that the island will not be taken if there are twenty men or thirty defending it; so that there can never come so many against it that it will be taken.

Qzurr took twenty men when travelling between his residences, and there were always with him when at home thirty men including his workmen. No man was as powerful in the Faroes apart from Þrándr.

The great heap of silver that Þrándr got on Haleyrí never came to an end, and he was the wealthiest of all and controlled now everything in the Faroes on his own, for he and Qzurr were not equally cunning.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

IT IS NOW TO BE TOLD ABOUT Sigmundr that he discussed with Jarl Hákon that he wants to cease this raiding and wants to make his way out to the Faroes; says that he does not want to hear any more that he has not avenged his father and that he should be criticised for this, and he asks the jarl to support him in this and to counsel him how he shall go about it. Hákon answers, saying that the sea is difficult to navigate to the islands and there are a lot of breakers and longships cannot be taken there.

‘And I shall have two cargo ships built for you and get you men for it so that we shall find it is well manned.’

Sigmundr thanks him for his kindness. His voyage is now prepared during the winter, and these ships are finished in the spring and men got for it. Haraldr came to see him in the spring and decided to undertake the journey with him. And when he was nearly ready, then Jarl Hákon spoke:

‘One must set someone on his way whom one wants to return.’

The jarl went out with Sigmundr. Then Hákon spoke:

‘What have you to say to me about this, what belief you have?’

Sigmundr answers: ‘I believe in my might and main.’

The jarl answers: ‘That must not be,’ he says, ‘and you must look for support to one I have complete faith in, that is to Þorgerðr Hǫrðabrúðr. We shall now go to see her and seek for good fortune for you from her.’

Sigmundr told him to arrange it. So now they go to the woods along a carriage road and a little bypath into the woods, and they find there a clearing before them, and there stands a building there with a paling round it. This building was extremely beautiful, and gold and silver were poured into the carving. Inside they went into the building, Hákon and Sigmundr, and not many people with them. There was a multitude of gods there. There were many glass windows in the building, so that nowhere was in shadow. There was a female there further inside athwart the building, and she was splendidly adorned. The jarl threw himself down before her feet and lay there a long time; and afterwards he stands up and tells Sigmundr that they must make her some offering and put the silver on the seat in front of her.

‘And what we must take note of,’ said Hákon, ‘is whether she is willing to accept that I would like her to let go of the ring that she has in her hand. You, Sigmundr, are to receive good fortune from that ring.’

So now the jarl takes hold of the ring, and it seems to Sigmundr that she clenches her fist on it, and the jarl did not get hold of the ring. The jarl throws himself down a second time before her, and Sigmundr notices this, that the jarl sheds tears, and stands up after that and takes hold of the ring, and it is now free, and the jarl gives Sigmundr the ring and spoke this, that Sigmundr must not part with this ring, and he promised this.

They separate now without more ado, and Sigmundr goes to his ships, and it is said that there were fifty men on each ship. So they sailed out to sea, and they had a fair wind until they came across birds from the islands, and they kept in sight of each other as they sailed. Haraldr Iron-Skull was on the ship with Sigmundr, while Þórir captained the other ship. Now a storm drove upon them, and then the ships got separated, and then drifted a great deal for a matter of days.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

NOW IT IS TO BE TOLD about Sigmundr’s party, that a fair wind rises for them and they now sail for the islands and see then that they have approached the islands from the east, and there are men on board with Sigmundr that know the landscape, and they are nearly come to Austrey. Sigmundr said that what he would most like was to get his hands on Þrándr. And when they were carried to the island there comes against them both current and gale so that they got nowhere near reaching the island; they managed to land on Sviney, since the men were skilful and capable. They reach there at dawn and straightway forty men run up to the farm, while ten looked after the ship. They seize the farm and break into the farm, take farmer Bjarni in his bed and lead him out. Bjarni asks who was the leader of their party. Sigmundr said who he was.

‘Then you must be angry with those that showed you nothing but harshness at the encounter when your father was killed, and I shall not deny that I was there, but do you remember anything at all about what I put in about your fate when it was proposed that you should be killed as well as your cousin Þórir, and I said this, that the two of you should no more be killed than I?’

‘Certainly I remember,’ said Sigmundr.

‘When shall I get my reward for that?’ said Bjarni.

‘Now,’ said Sigmundr; ‘you shall have quarter, but I alone will decide everything else.’

‘So be it, certainly,’ said Bjarni.

‘You shall come with us,’ said Sigmundr, ‘to Austrey.’

‘You will not get there any more than up into heaven,’ said Bjarni, ‘with the wind in this quarter.’

‘Then you shall go to Skúfey, if Qzurr is at home.’

‘That is for you to decide,’ says Bjarni, ‘and I believe Qzurr is there.’

The next night they go to Skúfey and again get to the island at dawn. It works out so luckily for Sigmundr that no men were on guard at the single track path there on Skúfey. They go up straight away, fifty men with those that Bjarni provided for them, come to the fortification, and Qzurr and his men are now come up onto the fortification, and Qzurr asks who these people are that are come there. Sigmundr said who he was.

‘You will be thinking you have business here with us. I will offer you atonement,’ said Qzurr, ‘that the best men in the Faroes should adjudge our case.’

‘There is going to be no atonement,’ said Sigmundr, ‘unless I alone decide.’

‘I shall not agree to those terms,’ says Qzurr, ‘to give you self-judgment.¹ I do not see that there is such a difference between us as men and between our cases that I need to do that.’

Sigmundr answers, telling his men to launch a pretended attack on the fortification as a feint.

‘But I shall consider what course I shall take.’

Haraldr Iron-Skull was inflexible in his views, being against any kind of settlement. Qzurr had thirty men in the fortification, and the fortification was hard to attack. Qzurr had a son that was called Leifr, and he was at that time a young child. So Sigmundr’s men attack the fortification, and the others defend it. Sigmundr goes along the fortification and examines it. He was so fitted out that he had a helmet on his head, was girded with a sword, had an axe in his hand, inlaid with silver and with a double-pointed curved blade, and the finest of weapons, and the shaft wound round with iron. He was in

¹ i.e. to give him the right to judge his own case. This right was sometimes given to the victim in a serious case.

a red tunic and a light mail-jacket over the top, and it was said by friends and enemies that there had not come such another man to the Faroes as he was. So Sigmundr notices in one place that the wall of the fortification was collapsed and was there somewhat easier to climb than elsewhere. Sigmundr goes back from the fortification and takes a run at it and gets so far up on it that he manages to hook his axe onto the fortification wall, and then quickly hauled himself up along the axe-shaft, and next he gets up on the wall. A man came quickly towards him and strikes at him with his sword. Sigmundr wards the blow off himself with his axe and quickly thrust the point of his axe-blade so that the axe sticks deep in his breast, and he is soon dead. Qzurr soon sees this and runs towards Sigmundr and strikes at him, but Sigmundr again wards off the blow, and strikes at Qzurr with the axe and takes off him his right hand and the sword falls down. Then Sigmundr strikes a second time at Qzurr in his breast so that the axe sinks in, and Qzurr fell. Then men rush at Sigmundr, but he jumps out from the fortification wall backwards and comes down standing. Now they crowd round Qzurr until he is dead. Now Sigmundr says to the men that were left in the fortification that there are two choices available: that he would cut off their food supply or burn them, or else they can submit to terms and let him alone determine what the terms should be. So they grant him self-judgment and give themselves up.

This is now to be said of Þórir that he is carried to Suðrey and comes now to see Sigmundr when this turn of events has already taken place. Now messages pass between Sigmundr and Þrándr for settlement and a truce was reached and a meeting arranged between them in Þórshöfn on Straumsey, where their assembly place was, that of the Faroe Islanders. There come there Sigmundr and Þrándr and a large number of people, and Þrándr is most cheerful. So there was a discussion about terms. Þrándr said that it was unseemly of him to have been at the confrontation—

‘Where your father was killed, Sigmundr,’ said Þrándr; ‘I will grant you a settlement that would be of greatest honour to you and that you might soonest be satisfied with. I want you to decide all the terms between us.’

‘That is not what I want,’ said Sigmundr; ‘I want Jarl Hákon to decide all terms, otherwise we shall be unreconciled, and I think this more fitting; and the two of us shall both go to see Jarl Hákon if we come to an agreement.’

‘What I am most keen for, kinsman,’ said Þrándr, ‘is that you should judge, and I will stipulate this, that I keep my right of abode in the land and the authority that I have.’

‘There will be no settlement,’ says Sigmundr, ‘except that which I am offering.’

And when Þrándr saw that anything else would be worse, then they agreed on this, and they are both to go to Norway in the summer. One of these

ships went to Norway in the autumn with many of the men on it that had accompanied Sigmundr out, but Sigmundr was on Skúfey during the winter and Þórir with him, his cousin, and Haraldr Iron-Skull and many men with them. Sigmundr held great style and had plentiful provisions in his residence.

So the winter passes and Sigmundr gets his ship ready. Þrándr gets a cargo ship that he owned ready. They are each aware of what the other is doing. Sigmundr sails as soon as he is ready. Travelling there with him are Þórir and Haraldr Iron-Skull and nearly twenty men on the ship. They reach Norway at Sunnmœrr, learn about Jarl Hákon that he is not far from there, and soon find him. Jarl Hákon welcomes Sigmundr and his comrades. Sigmundr tells him of his agreement with Þrándr, The jarl answers:

‘The two of you have not been equally cunning, you and Þrándr; it seems to me doubtful whether he will come soon to see me.’

The summer draws to a close and Þrándr does not come. Then ships arrive from the Faroes and they said that Þrándr had been driven back by the weather and had damaged his ship so that it was not seaworthy.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

NOW SIGMUNDR TELLS the jarl that he wants him to pronounce his judgment between him and Þrándr, even though he was not come. The jarl said that

‘So it shall be. I award double wergild, one for each of the brothers, a third for plotting against both your lives, when Þrándr wanted you both to be killed when he had your fathers killed, a fourth wergild shall come for Þrándr having sold you as slaves. As for the quarter share of authority that you own in the Faroes—from it [the authority] shall be taken both of these: Þrándr’s share and that of Qzurr’s heir, so that what you possess shall now be half the islands, and half shall fall to my share because of Hafgrímr and Þrándr having killed my followers, Brestir and Beinir. Hafgrímr shall be without wergild for the killing of Brestir and for attacking innocent men. Qzurr shall not be atoned for with money because of the injustice with which he took possession of your property and was slain on it, and you shall divide the payments between you and your cousin Þórir as you please. Þrándr may keep his right of abode if he abides by these terms. All the islands you shall hold in fief from me,’ says the jarl, ‘and pay me taxes from my share.’

Sigmundr thanked the jarl for this adjudication and stayed with him over the winter. In the spring he goes out to the Faroes and appoints a meeting with Þrándr in Þórshöfn on Straumsey; Þrándr comes to it with a large number of men. Sigmundr said that Þrándr has not yet kept to much of the agreement and so announces the jarl’s adjudication, telling him now to do either one thing or the other, keep to the settlement or break it. Þrándr bids Sigmundr adjudicate

and says that he would be best pleased if he [Sigmundr] came out of it the greatest man possible. Sigmundr said now it was no good holding back about this, told him to do one thing or the other quickly, agree or refuse, saying that he himself would still be just as happy for them to remain unreconciled. Þrándr chose rather to keep to the terms, and asked for a postponement for himself in paying the money, though the jarl had specified that the money should be paid within one year. So at people's request, Sigmundr let that be waived, so that this money should be paid over three years. Þrándr said that he was quite content that his kinsman Sigmundr should bear the authority now for as long as he himself had borne it previously.

‘And that is now fair that it should be so.’

Sigmundr said it was no good him glossing it over like that, saying that he would never be taken in by it. They now part with everyone being reconciled. Þrándr offered to foster Qzurr's son Leifr at his home in Gata, and he grew up there. Sigmundr got his ship ready in the summer to go to Norway, and now Þrándr paid up one third of the money and yet was very reluctant to do so. Sigmundr collected together Jarl Hákon's taxes before he sailed from the islands. Sigmundr's journey goes well and he brings his ship to Norway; and he soon goes to see Jarl Hákon and brings him his taxes. The jarl welcomes Sigmundr, both him and his cousin Þórir and all their comrades. They stay now with the jarl over the winter.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THAT SUMMER WHEN SIGMUNDR had become Jarl Hákon's follower the previous winter at Yule, he went with the jarl in to Frostapi, and then Sigmundr pleaded his father-in-law Þorkell's case for Jarl Hákon to declare him innocent and give him his free right of abode, and Jarl Hákon soon granted Sigmundr this. Then the jarl had Þorkell sent for and his household, and Þorkell stayed that winter with Jarl Hákon, and his wife and their daughter Þuríðr; she had given birth to a girl child the same summer as Sigmundr and his cousin had gone away, and this girl was called Þóra. The following spring Jarl Hákon gave Þorkell þurrafrost a stewardship out in Orkadahl, and Þorkell set up a home there and remained there continually until the time that this story has now reached. So Sigmundr rides out into Orkadahl and comes to Þorkell, and he is welcomed; so now Sigmundr makes his proposal of marriage and asks for Þuríðr. Þorkell responds well to this and considers that he himself and his daughter and all of them are shown honour and respect in this. So Sigmundr holds his wedding feast at Hlaðir with Jarl Hákon, and the jarl has this feast last for seven nights. Þorkell þurrafrost now becomes a follower of Jarl Hákon and his very dear friend. So they go home after that, but Sigmundr stayed with

the jarl, and his wife too, until he travels out to the Faroes in the autumn and his wife Þuríðr with him and his daughter Þóra. Things are now quiet on the islands during the winter.

In the spring people go to the assembly on Straumsey; large numbers of people attend, Sigmundr and a company of people with him. Þrándr came there, and Sigmundr claimed his money from Þrándr, the second third, and said, however, that he ought to have it all except that he was acting in accordance with people's request. Þrándr answers:

'This is the way things are, kinsman,' he said, 'that this man who is called Leifr and is the son of Qzurr, and I invited him to my home when we had made our agreement. So I want to ask you, kinsman,' said Þrándr, 'if you will grant Leifr some compensation for his father Qzurr, whom you killed, and I could pay him the money that I owe you.'

'I am not going to do that,' said Sigmundr, 'and you must pay me my money.'

'That will seem to you fair,' says Þrándr.

Sigmundr answers: 'Pay the money,' he says; 'anything else will be the worse for you.'

Þrándr now paid half of the third and said he was not just then ready to pay more now. Sigmundr then went up to Þrándr and had the silver-inlaid axe in his hand, with which he killed Qzurr; he put the point of the axe-head against Þrándr's breast and said he would press it so that he would really feel it unless he paid the money straight away. Then Þrándr said:

'You are a troublesome person,' he says, and told his man to go into his booth for the purse of money that was lying there and see whether there was anything left of the silver. This man went and handed the purse to Sigmundr, and then the money was weighed out, and it came to just the amount that was owed to Sigmundr. They now part without more ado.

That summer Sigmundr went to Norway with Jarl Hákon's taxes and he was welcomed there; he now stays a short time with the jarl and goes out to the Faroes and stays there over the winter. His cousin Þórir is continually with him. Sigmundr was popular there on the islands. He and Svíneyjar-Bjarni kept their agreement well, and Bjarni was always mediating agreement between Þrándr and Sigmundr, otherwise things would have turned out worse. In the spring people go to the Straumsey assembly. Large numbers of people attend. Sigmundr claimed his money from Þrándr, but Þrándr asked for compensation for his father on behalf of Leifr Qzurarson, and many people now put in suggestions that they should reach a proper agreement. Sigmundr answers:

'Þrándr will not pay Leifr the money any more than he does me, but at the request of good men, this money may stay where it is; but I am not giving it up and I am not paying it as things are.'

So they part with that and go home from the assembly. Sigmundr got ready again to go to Norway with Jarl Hákon's taxes, and turns out to be ready late. He sails out to sea when he is ready. His wife Þuríðr remains behind, but his cousin Þórir goes with him. Their journey goes well; they arrive north by Þrándheimr late in the autumn. So Sigmundr went to Jarl Hákon, and he is welcomed there. Sigmundr is now seven and twenty years old when this took place, and he stayed after that with Jarl Hákon.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THAT WINTER Jómsvikings came to Norway and fought with Jarl Hákon and his sons. The cousins Sigmundr and Þórir were in the battle with the jarls Hákon and Eirekr, and Sigmundr Brestisson was a ship's captain and leader of a troop in the jarl's army.¹

And after these events² Búi snatches up a halberd, extremely large, and now urges his men to advance and strikes now to both sides and so hard and fiercely that everything gives way that is in his path. And when Jarl Hákon sees this, then he calls on all his commanders of companies that they should launch an attack on Búi and drive this viking away; but they were most of them that were tired from the long attack and thought Búi better further off than closer, for they thought it would not be pleasant to have their night quarters beneath the halberd that Búi was wielding. Now Jarl Hákon sees that no one is taking on this exploit against Búi, while he is going completely beyond himself and dealing huge blows on the jarl's troops. Then he calls on Sigmundr Brestisson to lay his ship alongside Búi's ship and slay this mischief-maker. Sigmundr answers:

'It is true, jarl, both that I have many honours that you have granted me to reward you for, and also that now you want to place me in the greatest danger, if I am to take on Búi.'

Jarl Hákon now selects the best troops and the toughest for Sigmundr's ship and bids him now go forward nobly. After that he [Sigmundr] lays his ship alongside Búi's ship, and now there begins between them and the other's troop the fiercest of onslaughts. Búi was dealing mighty blows, for he was of enormous bodily strength, and many a man sank down before him and lost his life. Sigmundr now urges his comrades strongly to attempt a boarding of Búi's ship, thirty men at once from forward at the bows. Búi and his mates responded sharply, and a fierce attack and a sharp battle took place there. They soon came face to face, Búi and Sigmundr, and exchange blows; Búi

¹ Here the original *Færeyinga saga* probably had an account of the Jómsvikings and the battle at Hjørungavágr based on one of the versions of *Jómsvikinga saga*.

² This refers to the fight between Þorkell miðlangr and Búi digri, see *Flateyjarbók* I 193.

is the stronger man, but Sigmundr more agile and more skilled in fighting. Sigmundr again switches weapons from hand to hand, for he has made both his hands equally nimble to use in fighting, so that few men or none were able to do anything against it. So at this moment Sigmundr cuts Búi's arm off at the elbow, and soon the other one. And when Búi has lost both arms, then he sticks the stumps of his arms into the rings on his gold-chests, which were full of money. Then he spoke and then shouted loudly:

‘Overboard all Búi's troops!’

Now Búi leaps overboard and never came up again, and Sigmundr wins this victory on behalf of Jarl Hákon. This is the account of Hallbjørn hali the elder and Steingrímur Þórarinnsson and the report of the priest Ari Þorgilsson the Learned.

And now this battle is broken off with the events that have just now been related. Father and son now thank Sigmundr Brestisson for the victory that has now been won.¹

— — —

But of Sigmundr Brestisson this is to be told, that he stayed with Jarl Hákon over the winter after these events had taken place; but the following summer he goes out to the Faroes honoured with fine gifts from Jarl Hákon, both him and his son, and Sigmundr stays now over the winter in peace.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

NOW THE STORY is to be taken up where King Óláfr Tryggvason had been two winters in Norway and had Christianised during the winter the whole of Þrándheimr. So in the spring the king sent messages out to the Faroes to Sigmundr Brestisson and bade him come to see him; he had added to the message that Sigmundr would have honour from his journey, and the king would make him the greatest person in the Faroes, if Sigmundr would become his man.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

KING ÓLÁFR TRAVELLED from the north from Þrándheimr towards the end of the summer. And when he got to Sunnmœrr and was receiving a banquet there at a powerful farmer's, then there came from out in the Faroes Sigmundr Brestisson in response to the king's message, and his cousin Þórir. So when Sigmundr found the king, the king received him cheerfully; they soon had a conversation together. The king said this:

‘You have done well, Sigmundr, in not neglecting this journey; I asked you to come and see me mostly because I have been told a great deal about your prowess and ability; I very much want to be your absolute friend, if you

¹ It is probable that there is a gap, perhaps only a short one, in the narrative here.

are willing to do as I ask in those things about which I feel most concerned. There are also some people who say that fellowship between us is not unbecoming, since we are now both said to be not lacking in valour, and have for a long time suffered hardship and troubles before we got our proper rights, because some things have happened to us in exile and oppression that are not dissimilar. You were a child and were looking on when your father was killed, innocent though he was, while I was in my mother's womb when my father was treacherously killed, for no cause other than the malice and greed of his kinsmen. I am also told that far from being offered compensation for your father, that your kinsmen ordered you to be killed no less than your father, and you were afterwards sold just like a slave, or rather money was given for you to be enslaved and enthralled and in that way driven off and removed from your property and native land, and had no man's help in an unknown country for a long time, except that strangers took pity on you by the forethought and providence of him who can do all things. But to what I have just now told about you this is not dissimilar: when I was born, I was persecuted and waylaid and my death was planned by my fellow countrymen, so that my mother had to flee in poverty with me, her father and kinsmen and all her possessions. That was how the first three winters of my life passed. Next we were both captured by vikings and I was then separated from my mother, so that I never saw her again. I was then three times sold as a slave; I was then in Eistland among completely unknown people, until I was nine winters old. Then one of my kinsmen came along, who recognised my descent; he freed me from bondage and took me with him east to Garðar. I was there another nine winters still in exile, although I was now said to be a free man. There I got some advancement, and as a result more honour and regard from King Valdamarr than might have been expected for a foreign person, again very much in the same way as you got it from Jarl Hákon. Now it has so turned out in the end that each of us has regained his patrimony and native land after having been a long time deprived of happiness and honour. Now most of all because I have heard that you have never worshipped graven images in the manner of other heathen people, so I have great hopes that the sublime king of the heavens, creator of all things, will lead you to knowledge of his sublime name and orthodox belief as a result of my persuasion, and make you a partner with me in the true faith, just as always in strength and ability and in his other manifold gifts of grace which he granted to you as to me a long time before I had any knowledge of his glory. Now may that same almighty God grant this, that I may manage to lead you to the true faith and subject you to his service, so that as a result you may by means of his grace and my example and urging lead to his glory all your subordinates, which I hope will happen;

you shall also, if you are willing thus to give ear to my persuasions that I have just now uttered, and faithfully serve God with steadfastness, win for yourself friendship and esteem from me, although that is worth nothing in comparison with the honour and blessedness that God the almighty father will grant you as to all others who keep his commandments for the love of his holy spirit, to rule together with his sweet son, king of all kings, eternally in the highest glory of the kingdom of heaven.’

So when the king ended his speech, Sigmundr answered: ‘It is known to you, lord, as you mentioned in what you said, that I was bound in service to Jarl Hákon; he did me great honour, and I was very well content with my position, for he was loyal and helpful with his advice, liberal and amiable to his friends, although he was stern and treacherous to his enemies. But there is a great difference between your beliefs. But inasmuch as I understand from your pleasant arguments that this faith that you are preaching is in every respect more beautiful and advantageous than that which heathen men have, so I am eager to follow your advice and gain your friendship; and the reason I would like not to worship graven images is that I saw long ago that that religion was good for nothing, though I knew none better.’

CHAPTER THIRTY

KING ÓLÁFR WAS GLAD that Sigmundr took what he had said so sensibly. So Sigmundr was baptised and all his company, and the king had them given religious instruction. Sigmundr then stayed with the king for a while in high regard. But when autumn began, the king said to Sigmundr that he wants to send him out to the Faroes to Christianise the people that dwelled there. Sigmundr declined this task, but acceded, however, in the end to the king’s wishes. The king then appointed him ruler over all the Faroes and provided him with clerics to baptise the people and teach them the necessary doctrines. Sigmundr sailed as soon as he was ready, and his voyage went well. So when he got to the Faroes he summoned an assembly on Straumsey with the farmers; large numbers of people attended. And when the assembly was set up, Sigmundr stood up and made a speech and told about this, that he had travelled in the summer east to Norway to see King Óláfr Tryggvason; he also said that the king had assigned to his rule all the islands. Most farmers welcomed this. Then Sigmundr spoke:

‘I wish also to make it known to you that I have undergone a change of religion, and I am a Christian person, and I have taken on this mission and command from King Óláfr to convert here on the islands all people to the true faith.’

Bráendr answers his speech, saying that it was proper for the farmers to discuss among themselves this problematical case. The farmers said that

was well spoken. Þrándr and his people moved then to a different spot on the plain. Þrándr then argued before the farmers that the only thing for them to do was to refuse this command quickly, and the upshot of his arguments was that they all agreed on the one thing. So when Sigmundr sees that all the people had drifted over to Þrándr's party, so that none were left with him except those of his men that were Christian, then he spoke:

‘Too much power have I now allowed Þrándr.’

Next people drifted over to where Sigmundr and his party were sitting, and they [the people] already had their weapons aloft and were not behaving in a peaceful manner. Sigmundr's party leapt up to meet them. Then Þrándr spoke:

‘Let people sit down and not get so furious. And this has to be said to you, kinsman Sigmundr, that we farmers are all in agreement on one thing in relation to the mission that you have delivered, that we will by no means accept a change of religion, and here at the assembly will we launch an attack upon you and kill you, unless you leave off and give a firm undertaking never to preach this message again here on the islands.’

So when Sigmundr sees that he is getting nowhere with the faith at the moment, and has no power to contend with the whole population, then it comes about that he promises what they were asking, with witnesses and with handshakes, and with that they break up the assembly. Sigmundr stayed at home during the winter, on Skúfey, and was sorely displeased that the farmers had forced him [to submit], but yet did not let it be noticed.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

ONE TIME IN THE SPRING when the currents were at their strongest and people thought the sea between the islands was unnavigable, then Sigmundr went out from his home on Skúfey with thirty men on two ships, saying that now they should run the double risk of carrying out the king's mission or otherwise dying. They made for Austrey and managed to get ashore on the island; they reached there late at night unexpectedly, so that they surrounded the farm at Gata. After that they rammed a log of wood against the door of the apartment that Þrándr was sleeping in and broke it down, seized Þrándr and led him out. Then Sigmundr spoke:

‘Now it is again thus, Þrándr, that now one, now another gets on: you forced me to submit in the autumn and gave me two hard choices. Now I am going to give you two very unequal choices. The one is a good one, that you accept the true faith and have yourself baptised. But if you do not want that, then you have this alternative choice, that you shall be killed straight away. This one will be unpleasant for you, because you will then very soon lose wealth and worldly happiness in this life and receive in exchange misery and the eternal torments of hell in the next life.’

Þrándr answers: 'I am not going to fail my old friends.'

Sigmundr then got a man to strike Þrándr and put a great axe in this man's hand. But when he went up to Þrándr brandishing the axe, Þrándr looked at him and spoke:

'Don't be so quick to strike me, man. First I have something to say, so where is my kinsman Sigmundr?'

'Here I am,' he says.

'You can be sole judge between us, kinsman,' says Þrándr, 'and I shall adopt what faith you like.'

Then spoke Þórir Beinisson: 'Strike, man.'

Sigmundr answers: 'He shall not be struck for the time being.'

'It will be your death and that of your friends,' says Þórir, 'if Þrándr now goes free.'

Sigmundr said that this must be risked, then. Þrándr was now baptised by a priest, along with his household. Sigmundr made Þrándr then go with him after he had been baptised. Sigmundr then went round all the Faroes and did not stop until all people there were Christianised. After that he gets his ship ready in the summer and plans to go to Norway to take the king his taxes, and Þrándr from Gata as well. But when Þrándr realises that Sigmundr is planning to take him to see the king, then he asked to be excused from this journey. But Sigmundr was having none of it, and loosed the moorings as soon as there was a favourable wind. But when they had got not far over the sea, then they met both currents and a great storm; as a result they were driven back to the Faroes and broke the ship to pieces and lost all the money, though most of the men were saved. Sigmundr saved Þrándr and many others. Þrándr said that the voyage would not go smoothly for them if they made him go under compulsion. Sigmundr said that he should go all the same, even if he did dislike it. Sigmundr then got another ship and his own money to take to the king for the taxes, for Sigmundr had no lack of ready money. They set out to sea a second time; they now get further on their way than before; yet again they meet strong contrary winds and are driven back to the Faroes and their ship is damaged. Sigmundr said that he thought there must be some powerful obstacle to their going. Þrándr said that it would go the same however often they tried, as long as they made him go with them under compulsion. Sigmundr now lets Þrándr go free on condition that he swears oaths of allegiance that he shall have and hold the true faith, be loyal and true to King Óláfr and Sigmundr, neither hinder nor delay any man there on the islands from keeping faith and obedience with them, further and fulfil in every way that command of King Óláfr and also everyone else that he sends to the Faroes. And Þrándr swears boldly just as Sigmundr can most precisely formulate it. Þrándr then goes home to Gata,

and Sigmundr also stays there at his residence on Skúfey for that winter, for now it was very nearly autumn when they were driven back the second time. Sigmundr then had the ship that was least damaged repaired. All was quiet and uneventful in the Faroes that winter.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

SIGMUNDR BRESTISSON got his ship ready in the spring as soon as he thought it navigable from country to country. He set out to sea as soon as he was ready. He now left Þrándr behind on the conditions that were outlined above. Now Sigmundr's voyage went well. He found King Óláfr north in Niðaróss and brought him the money that he was paying for the taxes from the Faroes, that which had been lost the previous summer, and also the taxes that were now due to be paid. The king welcomed him, and Sigmundr stayed with the king for a long time during the winter. Sigmundr told the king in detail everything that had passed between him and Þrándr and the other islanders. The king answers:

‘It was a pity that Þrándr did not come to see me, and it is a great drawback to your dwelling out there on the islands that he has not been expelled from there, for it is my belief that in him there stays one of the very worst men in Northern Lands.’

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

IT WAS ONE DAY IN THE SPRING that King Óláfr spoke to Sigmundr Brestisson:

‘Now we shall entertain ourselves today and put our agility to the test.’

‘For that I am very incompetent, lord,’ says Sigmundr; ‘but yet it shall be at your discretion, like everything else that I can control.’

Afterwards they competed at swimming and shooting and other skills. And people say that Sigmundr came closest to King Óláfr of any men that were then in Norway in many accomplishments, and yet he fell short of the king in everything that they tried. It is said that on one occasion when King Óláfr was sitting drinking and was entertaining many people to a banquet, then Sigmundr was with the king on very friendly terms, and two people were sitting between the king and Sigmundr. Sigmundr laid his arms forwards on the table; the king looked over and saw that Sigmundr had a thick gold ring on his arm. The king said:

‘Let us see the ring.’

Sigmundr took the ring from his arm and passed it to the king. The king said:

‘Will you give me this ring?’

Sigmundr answered: ‘I have intended, lord, never to part with this ring.’

‘I will give you another ring in exchange,’ says the king, ‘and that one will be neither smaller nor less fine.’

‘I will not part with this one,’ says Sigmundr; ‘this I promised Jarl Hákon when he gave me the ring with much kindness, that I would not part with it, and this I shall carry out, for I found the giver to be a good man, in the jarl, and he treated me well in many ways.’

The king then spoke: ‘You may think them as good as you will, both the ring and him who gave it; but your luck is now deserting you, for this ring will be your death. I know that as surely as this, how you came to have it and where it came from. My motivation for this request was more that I wanted to shield my friends from troubles than that I desired to possess this ring.’

The king was now red as blood in the face, and their conversation was dropped. And never after was the king as pleasant towards Sigmundr as before. He stayed, however, with the king for a while, and after that went early in the summer out to the Faroes. He and King Óláfr parted then in friendship, and Sigmundr never saw him after that. Sigmundr came out to the Faroes and settled down in his residence on Skúfey.¹

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

NOW THE JARLS WERE RULING Norway, Eirekr and Sveinn, and they were very popular, because the people were allowed much freedom; they resided mostly at Hlaðir in Þrándheimr on their patrimony; it was there too that most of their resources were, in their native place. Yet Eirekr was the dominant one of the brothers in everything. Eirekr was greatly renowned because of the two battles that he had been in, off Svǫldr and at Hjǫrungavágr, which have been some of the greatest, and was victorious in both. Eirekr was the most handsome and shrewd of all men, and was in this like his father, but unlike him in disposition and conduct, so that everyone said that he has been one of the most striking cases of a man who was an improvement on his father.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

THE JARLS SVEINN AND EIREKR sent word out to the Faroes to Sigmundr Brestisson that he was to come to see them. Sigmundr does not neglect this journey, and travels to Norway and comes to see the jarls north at Hlaðir in Þrándheimr. They welcome him with great warmth, calling now to mind their old friendship. Sigmundr now becomes a follower of theirs.

¹ Here the original *Færeyinga saga* doubtless had an account of the change of rulers in Norway, the fall of Óláfr Tryggvason and the coming to power of the jarls Eirekr and Sveinn Hákonarson.

They granted him the Faroes as a fief, and they part in the greatest friendship and on the best of terms. Sigmundr goes out to the Faroes in the autumn.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THERE ARE THREE MEN introduced by name into the story; they grew up with Bráendr of Gata; one was called Sigurðr, and he was Bráendr's nephew, Þorlákr's son. He was a big man and strong, a handsome man, fair of hair, and it fell in locks. He was loaded with skills, and it was said that he had come closest to Sigmundr Brestisson in all skills. His brother was called Þórðr and was known as Short. He was the most powerfully built of men and of great strength. The third was called Gautr the Red; he was Bráendr's sister's son. They were all big men and strong. Leifr was being fostered there, and they were of similar age.

These were Sigmundr and Þuríðr's children: their daughter Þóra was the eldest, who was born on the mountain. She was a tall woman and imposing, not especially beautiful, and showed early signs of intelligence. Their eldest son was called Þórálfr, the second Steingrím, the third Brandr, the fourth Heri. They were all promising men.

Now it turned out with Christianity in the Faroes as in many other places in the jarls' realm, that each one lived as they pleased, though they themselves kept their faith well. Sigmundr kept his faith well, and all his people, and had a church built at his farm. It is said about Bráendr that he pretty well cast off his faith, and all his comrades.

Now they arrange an assembly, the Faroe Islanders. There come to it Sigmundr and Bráendr from Gata and a large number of people. Bráendr spoke to Sigmundr:

'This is how things are, kinsman Sigmundr, that I wish to request compensation from you on behalf of Leifr Qzurarson, that you may compensate him for his father.'

Sigmundr said that as to that he would abide by the judgment that Jarl Hákon had passed between them about their whole dealings together. Bráendr said that—

'On the contrary, it would be most seemly to grant Leifr the compensation for his father that the noblest men adjudge between you here on the islands.'

Sigmundr said Bráendr need not keep harping on about it, said that would not happen. Bráendr spoke that—

'The truth of the matter is that you are getting hard to get a hold on. It could also be that those kinsmen of mine that are growing up with me think you are not much of a just man when you will not share power with them, when we own more than half shares with you, and it is not certain that people will put up with this for long. You have brought much dishonour on me,'

said Þrándr, ‘and most of all when you forced me to change my religion, and what I find most difficult to put up with all the time is when I submitted to that; you can also expect that people are not going to put up with such injuries from you.’

Sigmundr said he would not lose any sleep over his threats. They parted now without more ado.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

IT IS SAID THAT one day in the summer, Sigmundr was going to the island of Dímun by boat, the Little, and the pair, Þórir and Einarr Suðreyingr, with him, because Sigmundr wanted to catch himself some sheep for slaughter that were grazing there on the island. Sigmundr and they were up on the island; then they saw that men were going up onto the island and fair shields shone there on them. They made a count of them, and there were twelve men come up onto the island. Sigmundr asked that men they could be. Þórir said he could tell that they were Gata-Chaps, Þrándr and those kinsmen of his.

‘So what course shall we now take?’ says Þórir.

‘There will be no problem about that,’ says Sigmundr; ‘we shall go to meet them,’ he says, ‘all of us with our weapons, and if they attack us, then we shall run away, each one of us separately, and yet all of us come down in one place, there where the way up onto the island is.’

Þrándr’s party discuss among themselves that Leifr should go to meet Sigmundr and Þorlákr’s sons with him and a fourth man with them. Sigmundr’s party hear this. They now go to meet each other and Þrándr’s party immediately attack them, but Sigmundr’s party now make off each of them separately, but came down all in one place and leap onto the way up, and there was just one man before them there. Sigmundr got to him first and soon finished him off. Then Sigmundr guarded the way up, and the other two, Þórir and Einarr, ran to the boat belonging to Þrándr’s party; one man was holding the cable there, and another was out on the boat. Þórir leapt at the one holding the cable and killed him; Einarr ran to Sigmundr’s party’s boat and launched it. Sigmundr guarded the way up and retreated down onto the beach away from them, for he wanted to get to their boat, and slew there one of their company there on the beach. Then he leapt out onto the boat, both he and Þórir. Sigmundr quickly threw the one that was on the boat overboard. So they rowed both boats away, but the one Sigmundr had thrown overboard got ashore. Þrándr and his party lit a beacon, and someone rowed to them, and they went home to Gata. Sigmundr gathered men round him and planned to capture Þrándr there on the island until he heard that they had got away.

And a little later in the summer Sigmundr went by boat, the three of them together, to collect his rents. They rowed into a narrow sound between certain

islands, and when they got out of the sound, then a boat was sailing towards them there and was only a short distance from them. They recognised these people, and it was Gata-Chaps there, Þrándr and the twelve of them together. Then Þórir spoke:

‘Much too close are they to us,’ he says; ‘so what course can we take, cousin Sigmundr?’ he says.

‘Not much is required,’ said Sigmundr; ‘and we shall adopt this course,’ says Sigmundr, ‘to row towards them, and they will want to lower their sail, and when our boat is carried forward past their boat, then you must draw your swords and cut the shrouds on the side where the sail is not coming down, and I will busy myself as I please.’

Now they row towards them, and when Sigmundr’s party’s boat is carried forward past them, then the two of them, Þórir and Einarr, cut all the shrouds on the side where their sail was not coming down. Sigmundr grabbed up a pole that was lying in his boat and drives it against the side of their ship’s hull at the top so hard that the next thing was that the keel of their ship was pointing up. He had pushed the pole against the hull of the ship on the side where the sail had come down and where it was already listing in that direction; so the ship overturned quickly, because he leaned on it with all his might. Five men of Þrándr’s company drowned there. Þórir declared that they should kill each one of those they could catch. Sigmundr said he did not wish that, saying that he would rather annoy them as much as possible. So they part there from them. Then spoke Sigurðr Þorláksson:

‘It is going to turn out here the same again with our wretched treatment at Sigmundr’s hands.’

He managed to right the boat and saved many men. Then spoke Þrándr when he got up onto the boat:

‘Now there will have taken place an exchange of fortunes between us and Sigmundr,’ he says, ‘because now he has fallen into a great error of judgment when he did not kill us when he had us entirely in his power; we must now also be very sharp about it from now on, and never let up before we have Sigmundr in hell.’¹

They said they were very keen for that. They now go back home to Gata without more ado. Now the summer draws to a close and they have no more dealings together for the time being.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

IT SO CAME ABOUT ONE DAY, when it was close on to winter, that Þrándr gathers men around himself, and sixty men come, and Þrándr says that now they shall seek for a meeting with Sigmundr, saying he had

¹ Hel was the abode of the dead (not a place of torment) in early times in Scandinavia.

so dreamed that now he will find escape difficult. They had two boats and a picked body of men. There in company with Þrándr were Leifr Qzurarson, Sigurðr Þorláksson, Þórðr the Short and Gautr the Red; Steingrímur was the name of a farmer on Austrey; Eldjárn kambhöttur, he had now for a long time been with Þrándr. Svíneyjar-Bjarni had not been involved in these affairs since he and Sigmundur came to terms. Þrándr's party travelled now until they get to Skúfey and drag their boat ashore and they all go up the beach until they get to the way up. Skúfey is such a good stronghold that they say that the island cannot be taken if there are ten men to defend it by the way up, and that there can never come so many that it will be taken. Eldjárn kambhöttur went up first by far and met Sigmundur's watchman by the way up. They immediately attacked each other, and so ended their exchange that they both fell down over the cliff and both were killed. Þrándr now goes up, as all of them did, to the farm and surrounded the farm and arrived so completely unexpectedly that no intelligence preceded them. They broke down the door. Sigmundur's people soon leap to their weapons, as did everyone present there. Housewife Þuríðr also takes up weapons and was no less effective than any man. Þrándr's party set fire to the buildings and intend to attack the farm with fire and weapons; they now launch a fierce attack. And when they have been attacking for a while, then housewife Þuríðr goes out to the entrance and spoke:

‘How long do you, Þrándr,’ she said, ‘intend to fight headless men?’

Þrándr answers: ‘That must be clear as daylight,’ he says, ‘and Sigmundur must be away.’

Þrándr now goes widdershins round the farm and whistles. Þrándr now comes to the entrance to an underground room which was then a short way from the farm; he moves then so that he had one hand down on the ground and moves it every now and then to his nose and spoke:

‘Here three of them have passed: Sigmundur, Þórir and Einarr.’

Now Þrándr goes on for a while and sniffed as if he was following a scent like dogs. He tells them not to disturb him. He goes on until he comes to a ravine, and this ravine goes straight across the island, Skúfey. Then Þrándr spoke:

‘Here have they passed, and here Sigmundur must have jumped over, whatever they have done with themselves. Now we shall divide our party,’ says Þrándr; ‘Leifr Qzurarson and Sigurðr Þorláksson shall go round one end of the ravine, and some of the party with them, and I round the other end, and thus we shall meet on the other side of the ravine.’

Now they do so. Then Þrándr spoke:

‘The thing to do now, Sigmundur, is to make some sign of your whereabouts if you are possessed of your courage and think yourself to be a valiant man, as you have long been said to be.’

But it was absolutely pitch-dark. And after a little while a man leaps over the ravine to Þrándr's party and strikes with his sword at Steingrímur, a neighbour of Þrándr's, and cleaves him down to the shoulders, and this was Sigmundur. He immediately leaps backwards back over the ravine.

'There went Sigmundur,' says Þrándr, 'and we shall make after them past the end of the ravine.'

So this they do, and they all meet each other, Leifr and his party and Þrándr. Sigmundur and his comrades now all come onto a crag by the sea, and they now hear men talking in all directions from them. Then spoke Þórir:

'Now we shall here offer a defence as long as it may be granted us.'

'I am not capable of defence,' says Sigmundur, 'for I let go my sword just now when I jumped backwards over the ravine, and we shall here leap down off the crag and set out swimming.'

'Let us do as you wish,' says Þórir.

They take this course, leap into the water forwards off the crag there. Then spoke Þrándr, when he heard the splash:

'There they went now,' he says. 'Now we shall take a boat wherever we can find one and search for them, some by sea, and some by land.'

And they do so, and do not find them.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

NOW IT IS TO BE TOLD about Sigmundur's party that they swim for a while and aim for Suðrey; it was the closest, and yet it was a good *vika* of sea away.¹ And when they had half crossed the strait, Einarr said:

'Here we shall part.'

Sigmundur said that should not be.

'So come, Einarr, between my shoulders.'

So he did so. Now Sigmundur swims for a while. Then spoke Þórir, where he was swimming behind:

'How long, cousin Sigmundur, are you going to carry a dead man behind you?'

'I do not reckon that is necessary,' says Sigmundur.

Now they swim on until a quarter of the strait was left. Then spoke Þórir:

'All our lives, cousin Sigmundur, have we been together, and much affection has each of us had for the other; but now it is most likely that our being together will come to an end. I have now swum on as far as I am able. I want you to look after yourself and your own life, but pay no attention to me, for you will be sacrificing your life, cousin, if you are held up by me.'

'That shall never be,' says Sigmundur, 'that we should part thus, cousin Þórir; we shall either both get ashore or neither.'

¹ A *vika* is thought to have been about 8·3 km.

Sigmundr now carries Þórir between his shoulders. Þórir was now so exhausted that he could hardly do anything for himself, so Sigmundr swims until he gets to Suðrey. There were breakers round the island. Sigmundr was now so exhausted that he sometimes was dragged away from the shore, and the next moment he was brought towards it. Þórir was now washed off his shoulders, and he drowned, but Sigmundr managed to scramble up in the end and was so exhausted that he could not walk and crawled up onto the beach and lay down in the heap of seaweed. This was around dawn. There he lay until it was light. There was a small farm there a short way up on the island that was called at Sandvík. There dwelt the man that was called Þorgrímr illi (the Evil), a big man and strong, a tenant of Þrándr from Gata. He had two sons, called Ormsteinn and Þorsteinn. They were promising men. In the morning Þorgrímr illi went to the beach and had a wood-axe in his hand. He came to where he saw that some red cloth was sticking up out of the heap. He clears off the seaweed and sees that a man is lying there. He asks who he was. Sigmundr says who he is.

‘Low lies our ruler now,’ he said, ‘so how has it come about?’

Sigmundr told all that had happened. The man’s sons come up. Sigmundr asks them if they would help then. Þorgrímr was slow to repond, and talks now in a low voice to his sons:

‘Sigmundr has so much wealth on him, as it appears to me,’ he said, ‘that we have never been possessors of the like, and his gold ring is very thick; it seems to me the best thing that we kill him and conceal it afterwards; this will never be found out.’

His sons opposed it for a while, but in the end agreed with him, and so they go to where Sigmundr was lying and now take hold of his hair, and Þorgrímr illi cuts off Sigmundr’s head with the wood-axe, and so Sigmundr loses his life, the most valiant man in most respects. They strip off his clothes and valuables and after that drag him up under a bank of earth and bury him there. Þórir’s body was cast ashore and they bury him by Sigmundr and conceal them both.

CHAPTER FORTY

THIS IS TO BE TOLD about Þrándr and his companions, that he goes back home after these events, while the farm on Skúfey was saved when people arrived, and it was not much burnt. Few people had died in it. Housewife Þuríðr, who afterwards was known as meginekkja (Might-Widow), kept her dwelling on Skúfey after her husband Sigmundr. There with her the children of her and Sigmundr grew up, and they were all promising. Þrándr and Leifr Qzurarson now took over all the Faroes and had control of them. Þrándr had Þuríðr meginekkja offered compensation, and her sons, but they did not much welcome that. Also little came of any looking for support

from the rulers of Norway on the part of Sigmundr's sons, since they were young in age. So some winters went by with all quiet on the Faroes.

Bráendr came to talk with Leifr Qzurarson, saying that he wanted to look for some match for him.

'Where shall that be looked for?' says Leifr.

'In the direction of Sigmundr's daughter Þóra,' says Bráendr.

'That does not look very likely to me,' says Leifr.

'You will never be given a wife if you do not ask for one,' says Bráendr.

So they set out for Skúfey with some men, and were given a cold welcome there. Bráendr and Leifr offer them atonement, Þuríðr and her sons, that the noblest men on the islands should adjudge between them. They were not eager to accept that. Then Bráendr made a proposal of marriage on Leifr's behalf and asked for Þóra on his behalf, Sigmundr's daughter; he thought this most likely to lead to complete reconciliation. Bráendr offered to improve Leifr's position with a great deal of wealth. They got a cool reception from them all, and Þóra herself answers thus:

'You will think I am behaving as though I am very eager to marry: I am willing on my part to offer terms for this. If Leifr is able to swear an oath that he is not my father's slayer, and did not get men to kill my father, then I make this condition about it, that he shall find out what caused my father's death, or who was responsible for his death, and if all these things are fulfilled, then we shall be able to make a reconciliation between us with the consent of my brothers and mother and others of our kinsmen and friends.'

This seemed to everyone well spoken and sensibly proposed, and they agree on this with each other, that the pair of them, Bráendr and Leifr, promise this, and so they part without more ado.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

SOON AFTER THIS, Bráendr sets out from home, from Gata, and Leifr with him, and they go by boat and are in a party of twelve. They travel to Suðrey and come to Sandvík to Þórgrímr illi's. This was some winters after the deaths of Sigmundr and his comrades. They arrive at the island late, they go up to the farm. Þórgrímr welcomes Bráendr and his party, and they go inside. Bráendr goes to the sitting room, and farmer Þórgrímr, while Leifr and the others sit near the outer door by fires that had been lit for them. Many things were discussed by Bráendr and Þórgrímr. Bráendr spoke:

'What do people think will have been the cause of Sigmundr Brestisson's death?' he said.

'People do not think they can be at all certain about that,' says Þórgrímr.

'Some think that you must have found them on the beach or in the sea and killed them.'

‘That is a nasty thought, and improbable,’ says Þrándr, ‘for everyone knew that we wanted to kill Sigmundr, so why should we want to conceal their deaths? And that is an unkind suggestion.’

‘There are also some people that say,’ says Þorgrímr, ‘that they will have collapsed while swimming, or Sigmundr may have reached land somewhere, as he was capable of great feats of many kinds, and may then have been killed, if he had reached land greatly exhausted, or his death concealed.’

‘That is a very apposite suggestion,’ says Þrándr, ‘and it is my view that that is how it happened. So what now, comrade? Is it not as I suspect, that you are responsible for Sigmundr’s death?’

Þorgrímr denies this as strongly as he can.

‘There is no point in your disputing this,’ says Þrándr, ‘for I feel sure that you are guilty of this deed.’

He denies it as before. So Þrándr has Leifr and Sigurðr called and orders that Þorgrímr and his sons be tied up, and this was done so that they are fettered and strongly bound. Þrándr had now had great fires built up in the living room and four gratings he has made with four corners, and nine squares Þrándr cuts out in all directions from the gratings, and he sits on a seat between the fire and the gratings. He asks them now not to talk to him. and they obey. Þrándr sits thus for a while. And as time passed, then a person goes into the living room, and he was all soaked. They recognise this person, that it was Einarr Suðreyingr. He goes to the fire and stretches out his hands to it, and for a short time, and goes back out after that. And as time passed, a person goes into the living room; he goes up to the fire and stretches out his hands towards it and after that goes out. They recognised that this was Þórir. Soon after this the third man goes into the living room. This was a big man and very bloody. He had his head in his hand. This one they all recognise to be Sigmundr Brestisson. He stops for a while in the middle of the floor and after that goes out. So after this, Þrándr gets up from the seat and heaved a sigh wearily and spoke:

‘Now you can see what caused the deaths of these men. Einarr has died first and frozen to death or drowned, since he was the least strong; then will Þórir have died next, and Sigmundr will have got ashore exhausted, and these men will have killed him, since he seemed to us bloody and without a head.’

Þrándr’s companions confirmed all this, that so it will have gone. Now Þrándr says that they must search everything, and so they do and find no clue. They, Þorgrímr and his sons, argue and said they were not responsible for this deed. Þrándr said there was no point in arguing; he told his men to search thoroughly, and they do so again. There was a large and old-fashioned chest standing in the living room. Þrándr asks whether they have searched the chest. They said they had not, and broke it open, and there seemed to

them nothing there in it but just rubbish, and they looked in it for a while. Þrándr spoke:

‘Turn the chest over.’

And they did so. In it they found a ragbag that had been in the chest, and passed it to Þrándr. He undid it and there were many rags wrapped up together there. And in the end Þrándr found in it a large gold ring and realised that this was the ring that had been owned by Sigmundr Brestisson and given to him by Jarl Hákon. So when Þorgrímr saw this, then he admits to the secret murder of Sigmundr and tells now everything that had happened; he shows them where the two, Sigmundr and Þórir, were buried, and they conveyed their bodies away. Þrándr now makes Þorgrímr and his sons go with him. Afterwards they were interred, Sigmundr and Þórir, at the church on Skúfey, the one that Sigmundr had had built.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

SO AFTER THIS Þrándr has a well-attended assembly called on Straumsey in Þórshöfn; that is the assembly-place of the Faroe Islanders. There they, Þorgrímr illi and his sons, told, so that all those present at the assembly hear, of the killing and death of Sigmundr, saying that they had slain him and concealed him afterwards. After these things have been told, then they are hanged there at the assembly, and so ended their lives.

Now the pair, Leifr and his foster-father Þrándr, went on with the proposal to Þóra and offer them atonement as well, one that they could most easily be content with. And the outcome of this business is that Leifr marries Sigmundr’s daughter Þóra, and they are reconciled with complete reconciliation. Leifr sets up a household on his patrimony on Suðrey at Hof, and it is now quiet on the Faroes for some time. Þórálfr Sigmundarson married and builds a dwelling on Dímun and is a good farmer.¹

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

THAT SAME SUMMER there came from out in the Faroes to Norway, in response to a message from King Óláfr, Lawspeaker Gilli, Leifr Qzurarson, Þórálfr from Dímun and many other farmers’ sons. So Þrándr in Gata got ready for the journey, but when he was nearly ready, then he got an attack of nerves so that he was unable to go anywhere, and he stayed behind. So when these Faroe Islanders came to see King Óláfr, then he called them to talk with him and held a meeting with them. He then revealed to them the purpose that underlay

¹ Here a passage is missing about the changes of ruler in Norway and the coming of Óláfr Haraldsson to power, intent on strengthening Christianity in Norway and its colonies. The continuation as far as ch. 49 consists mostly of passages extracted from *Óláfs saga helga* (they are in both *Heimskringla* and the Separate saga).

the journey and told them that he wished to have taxes from the Faroes, and this also, that the Faroes were to have the laws that King Óláfr laid down for them. But at this meeting it was evident in the king's words that he was going to exact guarantees for this business from those Faroese people that were now come there, if they were willing to confirm this treaty with oaths. He suggested to the people that seemed to him most important that they should become his followers and receive from him esteem and friendship. And these words seemed to these Faroese as if there might be some doubt about how their situation might change if they were unwilling to accept everything that the king was asking of them. But though more meetings had to be appointed for this business before it was concluded, yet everything that the king demanded was adopted. These submitted themselves to the king and became his followers: Leifr and Gilli and Þórálfr, and the whole company swore oaths to King Óláfr to keep in the Faroes the regulations and laws of the land that he laid down for them, and the payment of taxes that he fixed. Afterwards these Faroese prepared to return home. And at parting the king gave friendly gifts to those that had become his followers. They then go on their way when they were ready, but the king had a ship got ready and got a crew for it and sent these men to the Faroes to receive there the taxes that the Faroe Islanders were to pay him. They were not soon got ready and left when they were ready, and of their voyage there is this to say, that they do not come back, nor did any tax the summer that followed next, because they had not reached the Faroes; no one there had collected tax.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THAT SAME SUMMER¹ King Óláfr heard that the ship had disappeared that he had sent to the Faroes the previous summer, and that it had nowhere come to land, as far as could be learned. The king then got another ship for it, and a crew with it, and sent it to the Faroes to fetch tax. These men left and made out to sea, but afterwards nothing was heard of this one any more than of the previous one, and there were many guesses about what must have become of these ships.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

THAT SPRING² SHIPS HAD TRAVELLED from Norway to the Faroes; on this ship went King Óláfr's messages saying that there should come from out in the Faroes one or other of these followers of his, Leifr Qzurarson or Lawspeaker Gilli or Þórálfr from Dímun. Now when this message got to the Faroes and was actually announced to them, then they discuss among

¹ In the previous chapter of *Óláfs saga helga* Icelanders had visited the king. According to the chronology of that saga, the year was 1025.

² According to the previous chapter of *Óláfs saga helga* this must be 1026.

themselves what could be behind the message, and agreement was reached between them that they felt that the king must want to enquire about the reports which some people held to be true about what must have happened on the islands concerning the loss of the kings' messengers, the two ships' crews of which not a single man had survived. The decision was reached by them that Þórálfr should go. He set out and got a cargo ship ready that he owned and got for it a crew; they were ten or twelve on the ship. So when they were ready and were waiting for a favourable wind, then it happened at Þrándr's in Gata on Austrey, that one fine day Þrándr went into the living room, and lying there on the raised floor were his two nephews, Sigurðr and Þórðr; they were the sons of Þorlákr. The third one there was called Gautr the Red. He was also a relative of theirs. All these foster-sons of Þrándr's were doughty men; Sigurðr was the eldest of them and superior to them in almost everything. Þórðr had a nickname: he was called 'the Short'. Yet he was the tallest of men, though what was more, he was sturdy and of great strength.

Then Þrándr spoke: 'Much changes in a man's life: it was not common when we were young for men to be sitting or lying down on a fine day, those that were young and fully capable of anything. It would not have seemed likely to men of former times that Þórálfr from Dímun would have been more grown up than you. But the cargo ship that I have had and that stands here in the boatshed I think is now getting so old that it is rotting under the pitch. Here every building is full of wool and it is not being put out for sale. It would not be so if I were a few winters younger.'

Sigurðr leapt up and called to the others, Þórðr and Gautr, said he could not bear Þrándr's provocation. They go outside to where the workmen were; they go up and launch the cargo ship. Then they have cargo carried to it and loaded the ship; there was no lack of cargo for it there in the dwelling, also all the tackle with the ship. They got it ready in a few days. They were also ten or twelve men on the ship. They and Þórálfr all ran out on the same wind. They were always within sight of each other at sea. They made land at Hernar late in the day; Sigurðr's party lay further out along the shore, though there was only a short distance between them.

It came about in the evening when it was dark and Þórálfr's party were thinking about getting ready for bed, then Þórálfr went up ashore and another man with him. They looked around for somewhere to relieve themselves. And when they had just got down to the beach, then (said the one who was with him) a cloth was thrown over his head, he was lifted up off the ground. At tht moment he heard a crash. After that he was carried and tossed down so that he fell, and it was the sea beneath him, and he was driven under the water. So when he got ashore he went to where he and Þórálfr had parted. There he found Þórálfr and he was cloven down to the shoulders, and he was

dead. So when the crew found out about this, then they carried his corpse out onto the ship and laid it out for the night.

At this time King Óláfr was at a banquet on Lygra; it was reported there. Then an arrow-assembly was summoned,¹ and the king was at the assembly. He had had summoned to the assembly the Faroe Islanders from both ships, and they were come to the assembly. So when the assembly was set up, then the king stood up and spoke:

‘Events have taken place here such as it is better should be infrequent. Here a good fellow is deprived of life, and we believe that he was innocent. So is there any person at the assembly who can say who is responsible for this deed?’

But no one there owned up. Then the king spoke:

‘There is no point in concealing what my opinion is about this deed, that I think it is due to the Faroe Islanders. It seems to me most likely that the way it was brought about was that Sigurðr Þorláksson must have killed the man, and Þórðr the Short must have plunged the other one into the water. And along with this, I would guess that this must be assumed to be the reason, that they would not want Þórálfr to tell tales about them of the wicked deeds which he must have known were true, and we have had suspicions of, concerning the concealed murders and crimes by which my messengers have been secretly killed there.’

So when the king ended his speech, then Sigurðr Þorláksson stood up. He spoke:

‘I have not before talked at assemblies; I think I must seem not a fluent speaker. And yet I believe there is sufficient need for me to offer some reply. I shall make a guess that this speech which the king has uttered must be come from under the roots of those people’s tongues who are much less intelligent than he is, and worse. But there is no concealment of the fact that they must want to be completely our enemies. It is an improbable supposition that I would want to be the slayer of Þórálfr, for he was my foster-brother and good friend. But if there had been something else in it and there had been issues between me and Þórálfr, then I have enough sense to have ventured on this deed at home on the Faroes rather than here under your nose, king. So I wish to deny this charge for my part and on behalf of all us crew-men; I am willing to offer oaths in support of this in accordance with your laws. But if you feel that more satisfactory, then I am willing to submit to ordeal by hot iron;² I wish that you yourself should be present at the ordeal.’

¹ An arrow could be carried round from farm to farm to summon people to an assembly, especially if it was for warlike purposes.

² For this, he would have to carry a piece of red-hot iron nine paces with a bishop or priest present. If after a few days the hand was free of infection, he would be deemed innocent.

And when Sigurðr ended his speech, then there were many in support, begging the king that Sigurðr might be declared not guilty; Sigurðr was considered to have spoken well and they said he must be innocent of what he was charged with. The king answers:

‘The alternative judgments on this man will be diametrically opposite. And if he is falsely charged, then he must be a good man, but if otherwise, he must be rather bolder than there are precedents for, and that is none the less my feeling; but still I guess he will have to provide his own evidence for it.’

So at people’s request, the king accepted a pledge from Sigurðr for the ordeal by hot iron. He was to come the next day to Lygra; the bishop was to conduct the trial by ordeal there, and so the assembly broke up. The king returned to Lygra, and Sigurðr and his companions to their ship. Then it soon began to get dark at night. Then Sigurðr spoke to his companions:

‘It is true to say that we have got into a tight spot and are victims of a great deal of calumny, and this king is crafty and tricky, and our fate is obvious if he has his way, because first he had Þórálfr killed, and now he wants to make out we are criminals. He will have no trouble in falsifying this trial by ordeal. So I think anyone will have the worst of it who risks this with him. There is now rather a light breeze off the mountains out along the sound; my advice is that we hoist our sail and make out to sea. Let Þrándr go next summer with his wool if he wants to sell it. But if I get away, then I think it likely I shall never to come to Norway again.’

His companions thought this a splendid plan. They set to and hoist the sail and make it go throughout the night out to sea as fast as they can. They do not stop before they get to the Faroes and back home to Gata. Þrándr was displeased with their voyage. Their reply was not polite, and still they stayed at home with Þrándr.

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

SOON KING ÓLÁFR LEARNED that Sigurðr’s party were gone away, and now dark rumours got about relating to their affairs. There were many that claimed it was likely that Sigurðr’s party must have been justly charged, who previously had denied that he was and contradicted it. King Óláfr said little about this affair, but he now felt sure of the truth of what before he had suspected. The king now went on his way and received banquets where they had been prepared for him.

CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

KING ÓLÁFR GOT READY in the spring to leave Niðaróss,¹ and large numbers of troops joined him, from both there in Þrándheimr and from

¹ According to the chronology of *Óláfs saga helga*, this was in 1027.

the north of the country. So when he was ready for his journey, then he went with his troops first of all south to Mœrr and gathered together there a levy of troops, and also from Raumsdalr. After that he went to Sunnmœrr. He lay a long time in Hereyjar and waited for his troops; then he frequently held meetings with his followers. Much came to his ears there that seemed to him to need discussion. It came about at one of these meetings that he held that he made reference to this affair, speaking of the loss of men that he had suffered from the Faroes.

‘And the tax,’ he says, ‘that they have promised me, now is not forthcoming. So now I intend to send men again for the tax.’

The king referred this matter somewhat to various people, that they should undertake this journey. But the answers came in reply that everyone declined this trip. Then a man stood up at the assembly, tall and very imposing; he had a red tunic, a helmet on his head, girded with a sword, a great halberd in his hand. He began to speak:

‘It is true to say,’ he said, ‘that there is here a great difference between people. You have a good king, but he has poor servants. You refuse a mission that he offers you, but you have in the past received from him friendly gifts and many honourable things, while I have been up to now no friend of this king; he has also been my enemy; he reckons that there are reasons for this. Now I wish to offer, king, to go on this journey for you, if there is no better choice available.’

The king answers: ‘Who is this man, the valiant-looking one, who answers my speech? You present yourself as very different from other people that are here, when you offer yourself for the journey, but they decline who I thought would have responded very well to it. But I know nothing at all about you, and I do not know your name.’

He answers as follows: ‘My name is not a problem, king. I expect you will have heard me named. I am known as Karl mœrski (of Mœrr).’

The king answers: ‘That is right, Karl, I have heard you named before, and it is true to say that there have been times that if we had happened to meet, you would not have lived to tell the tale. But now I will not act worse than you, since you are offering me your help, by not giving in return thanks and gratitude. You, Karl, must come to me and be my guest today. We shall then discuss this affair.’

Karl said it should be so.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

KARL HINN MÆRSKI had been a viking and a very great robber, and the king had very often sent men to him and wanted to take his life. But Karl was a man of great family and a very enterprising man, a man of skills

and abilities of many kinds. So since Karl had taken on this journey, then the king gave him atonement and after that friendship, had his journey got ready for him in the best possible manner. They were nearly twenty men on the ship. The king sent messages to his friends in the Faroes, committed Karl for support and protection to the care of Leifr Qzurarson and Lawspeaker Gilli, sending his tokens for this. Karl went as soon as he was ready. They had favourable winds and got to the Faroes and sailed into Þórshöfn on Straumsey. After that an assembly was called, and it was well attended. Þrándr from Gata came to it with a large company; there also came to it Leifr and Gilli; they also had a large crowd of followers. So when they had pitched their tents and encamped, then they went to see Karl mærski. There were polite greetings. After that, Karl presented the words and tokens of King Óláfr and his friendly words to the two of them, Leifr and Gilli. They welcomed this and offered Karl their hospitality and to further his mission and to give him such protection as they had the resources for. He accepted this gratefully. A little later Þrándr turned up and welcomed Karl.

‘I am,’ he said, ‘very happy that such a fine fellow has come here to this land bringing messages from our king whom we are all duty bound to support. I wish nothing more, Karl, than that you come to my dwelling for your winter quarters, and also with you as many of your company as will make your standing higher than it was before.’

Karl answers that he was already engaged to go to Leifr’s.

‘But I would otherwise,’ he says, ‘gladly accept this invitation.’

Þrándr answers: ‘Then will Leifr win honour by this. So are there any other things, then, that I can do so as to be of service to you?’

Karl answers that he thought it would be a great help if Þrándr were to collect together the taxes from across Austrey and also from all over Norðreyar. Þrándr said that it was his duty and pleasure to grant this furtherance to the king’s business. Þrándr then went back to his booth. At this assembly nothing else happened to tell about. Karl went to stay with Leifr Qzurarson, and he stayed there over the following winter. Leifr collected taxes over Straumsey and over all the islands south of there.

The following spring Þrándr from Gata caught a great sickness: he had a heaviness in his eyes, and yet other chronic illnesses as well; and yet he got ready to go to the assembly as his custom was. So when he got to the assembly and his booth was being covered, then he had it covered with black coverings inside at the back so that it would then let less light in. So when some days had passed of the assembly, then the two, Leifr and Karl, go to Þrándr’s booth and had a lot of men with them. And when they got to the booth, then there were standing outside there some men. Leifr asked whether Þrándr was inside in the booth. They said that he was there. Leifr said that they should ask Þrándr to go out.

‘Karl and I have business with him,’ he said.

But when the men came back, then they said that Þrándr had such pain in his eyes that he could not come out.

‘And he asked, Leifr, that you should go in.’

Leifr spoke to his companions that they should go warily when they got into the booth.

‘Do not crowd forward; let the one that goes in last be the first to go out.’

Leifr went in first, and next to him Karl, then his companions, and they went fully armed, as they did when they had to be ready for a battle. Leifr went further inside to the black coverings, then asked where Þrándr was. Þrándr answered and greeted Leifr. Leifr responded to his greeting, then asked whether he had collected any taxes across Norðreyjar, or what fulfilment there would be now with the silver. Þrándr answered and said that what he and Karl had discussed had not slipped his mind, and also that payment would be made with the taxes.

‘Here is a purse, Leifr, which you are to take charge of, and it is full of silver.’

Leifr looked around and saw few men in the booth; men were lying on the raised floor, but few were sitting up. After that Leifr went to Þrándr and took the purse and carried it further out in the booth, where it was light, and poured the silver down onto his shield and stirred it in his hand and said that Karl should see the silver. They examined it for a while. Then Karl asked what Leifr thought of the silver. He answers:

‘What I think is that every coin that is bad in the Norðreyjar, it must be come here.’

Þrándr heard this and spoke: ‘Does the silver not look well to you, Leifr?’

‘That’s right,’ he says.

Þrándr spoke: ‘They are not half rogues, our kinsmen, though, since they cannot be trusted in anything. I have sent them this spring to collect taxes on the islands in the north, as I was fit for nothing in the spring, and they have taken bribes from farmers to take such forgeries as are not considered legal tender, and the best thing is, Leifr, to look at this silver which has been collected for my land taxes.’

Leifr now carried the silver back, and took another purse, and carried that to Karl. They examined this money. Karl asked what Leifr thought of this silver. He said he thought this was bad money.

‘And not such as for the dues that were carelessly claimed could not be accepted, but I am not willing to take this money to hand to the king.’

A man that was lying on the raised floor threw his cloak off his head and spoke:

‘True is the old saying: everyone gets more of a coward as he gets older. So it is with you, Þrándr: you let Karl hinn mœrski throw money back at you the whole time.’

This was Gautr the Red. Þrándr leapt up at Gautr's words and began to rant madly, told his kinsmen off in strong terms. But in the end he declared that Leifr was to return that silver to him.

'But accept this purse here which my tenants have brought in to me this spring. And though I cannot see clearly, yet the hand itself is most reliable.'

A man rose up on his elbow, who was lying on the raised floor. This was Þórðr the Short. He said:

'We are not half getting taught a lesson by this Mœra-Karl, and he deserves to get some recompense.'

Leifr took the purse and again carried it before Karl. They looked at this money. Leifr spoke:

'There is no need to spend long looking at this silver; here each coin is better than the last, and we will accept this money. Get someone, Þrándr, to see to the weighing.'

Þrándr answers that he thought the best thing now was to get Leifr to see to it on his behalf. Leifr and the others now went out and a little way from the booth, then sat down and weighed the silver. Karl took his helmet off his head and poured into it the silver that had been weighed. They saw someone walking by them and he had a mace in his hand¹ and a hood low over his head, a green cape, bare footed, with linen breeches bound close to his legs. He set the mace down on the ground and walked away from it and spoke:

'Be careful, Mœra-Karl, that you are not harmed by my mace.'

Shortly after this a man came there running and shouted excitedly to Leifr Qzurarson, told him to go as quickly as he could to Lawspeaker Gilli's booth.

'Sigurðr Þorláksson ran in through the opening of the booth there and has given one of the men in the booth a mortal wound.'

Leifr immediately leapt up and went off to see Gilli; all his booth-men went with him, but Karl remained behind. The Easterners stood in a ring round him. Gautr the Red ran up and struck with a hand-axe over the shoulders of the men, and the blow fell on Karl's head, and it was not a serious wound. Þórðr the Short grabbed up the mace that was standing in the ground and struck down on the back of the hand-axe so that the hand-axe stuck in the brains. Then a crowd of men rushed out of Þrándr's booth. Karl was carried away dead. Þrándr was displeased with this deed and yet offered money as atonement for his kinsmen. Leifr and Gilli took up a prosecution, and there was no monetary compensation for it. Sigurðr was made outlaw for the injury which he caused Gilli's booth-mate, and Þórðr and Gautr for the killing of Karl. The Easterners got ready the ship that Karl had brought there and travelled east to see King Óláfr. But this turned out not to be possible because of the warfare that had

¹ Ólafur Halldórsson has suggested this meaning of *refði* in *ÍF* XXV xvi–xviii and lxxiv. The idea is perhaps that the mace is a symbol of sovereignty over the Faroes.

now broken out in Norway, and that is now the end of the story about the events that arose from King Óláfr's claiming taxes from the Faroes.

CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

AFTER THE KILLING of Karl mœrski and the wounding of Lawspeaker Gilli's booth-man these kinsmen of Þrándr's were driven away and exiled from the Faroes: Sigurðr Þorláksson, Þórðr the Short, Gautr the Red. Þrándr provided them with a seaworthy ship and some money, and they felt they had been sent off meanly. They were very critical of Þrándr, they said that he had taken possession of their patrimonies and shared none of it with them. Þrándr said they had much more than they had a right to, said he had looked after them for a long time and often handed out goods to them and had little thanks for it.

So Sigurðr and the rest set out to sea and they are twelve men together on the ship, and the word is that they are planning to make for Iceland. And when they have been a short time at sea, then a great storm blows up, and this weather lasted nearly a week. They all knew who were on land that this was the worst it could be for Sigurðr and his party, and people felt hopeless about their voyage. And towards the end of autumn flotsam was found from their ship on Austrey. And when winter came there took place great hauntings in Gata and far and wide on Austrey, and they appeared often, Þrándr's relatives, and people suffered great harm from this: some had broken bones or other injuries. They attacked Þrándr so much that he dared not go anywhere on his own during the winter. There was now a lot of talk about this.

So towards the end of winter Þrándr sent word to Leifr Qzurarson that they should meet, and they do so. And when they met, Þrándr spoke:

'We met last summer, foster-son, in great trouble, and it came close to the whole assembly breaking out in fighting. Now I would like, my foster-son,' said Þrándr, 'that it should be made law by our advice that people should never carry weapons to an assembly, where people ought to use legal language about their affairs and words of wisdom.'

Leifr said that was well spoken.

'And we must on this take the advice of my kinsman Lawspeaker Gilli.'

They were sons of sisters, Gilli and Leifr. They now meet all together and discuss this matter amongst themselves. Gilli answers Leifr thus:

'I think it is unsafe to trust Þrándr, and we must therefore agree that all men in the service [of the king] should keep their weapons, and some of our followers, but the common people should be unarmed.'

So they make a firm decision upon this. Now the winter comes to an end and people come to the assembly in the summer on Straumsey. So it happens one day that they both, Gilli and Leifr, go from their booths onto a hill that

there was on the island, and have a talk together. And now they see on the east of the island beneath the sun, that on the headland that was there, not all that few men were going ashore, until they see thirty men. Shining in the sun there were fair shields and splendid helmets, axes and spears, and this force was of the toughest. They saw a man walking in front, tall and valiant-looking in a red tunic and he had a particoloured shield, dark blue and yellow, a helmet on his head and a great halberd in his hand. They thought they recognised Sigurðr Þorláksson there. A man was walking there next to him, strongly built, in a red tunic and he had a red shield. They certainly thought they recognised him, that it was Þórðr the Short there. The third man had a red shield and the image of a man drawn upon it, and a great axe in his hand. That was Gaurr the Red.

Leifr and Gilli now went quickly back to their booths. Sigurðr's party soon arrive, and they are all well armed. Þrándr goes from his booth to meet Sigurðr's party, and many men with him, and his men all with weapons.

The two of them, Leifr and Gilli, had few men compared with those Þrándr's party had, and the greatest difference was that only a few of them had weapons. They, Þrándr and his kinsmen, went up to Leifr and his companion's party. Then Þrándr spoke:

'This is how it is, foster-son Leifr,' he said, 'that here are come my kinsmen, and their last departure from the Faroes was hasty. I am now not keen for me and my kinsmen to get so much the worst of it at the hands of you and Gilli. There are here two choices available: the first is that I should be sole arbiter between both your parties, but if you do not want that, then I shall not hold them back from what they want to do.'

Leifr and his companion see that they have not the number of men at the moment to stand up to Þrándr's party. They now decide to hand over the whole affair to the judgment of Þrándr, and he immediately delivers his arbitration, says he will be no wiser if he waits.

'This is my arbitration,' says Þrándr, 'that I wish these kinsmen of mine to be free to be anywhere in the Faroes that they like, though they have previously been exiled, but I do not wish to award payment from any of them. The power that is here in the Faroes: I wish to make a division of this, that I shall hold one third, Leifr another, Sigmundr's sons the last. This power has for a long time been a matter for jealousy and a bone of contention. To you, foster-son Leifr, I will offer child-fosterage, and foster your son Sigmundr. I will do this for the sake of friendship with you.'

Leifr answers: 'I would like this child-fosterage to be dependent on Þóra's decision, whether she wishes that her son should go to you or should be here with us.'

They part without more ado. And when Þóra knows about the fosterage, then she answers:

‘It may be that again I see this differently; but I will not choose to deprive my son Sigmundr of this fosterage if I have my way, for I think Þrándr in many ways superior to most men.’

Þóra and Leifr’s son Sigmundr went to Gata to Þrándr for fostering. He was at that time three winters old and the most promising material for manhood, and there he grew up.

CHAPTER FIFTY

DURING THE TIME that Sveinn was king in Norway and his mother Álfífa, Þrándr was at home in Gata, and his kinsmen Sigurðr and Þórðr and Gautr the Red. And it is said that Þrándr was an unmarried man. He had one daughter, who was called Guðrún. And when Þrándr’s kinsmen had been there for a while, then he comes to talk with them and said that he is not willing for them to be there any longer with their sluggishness and idleness. Sigurðr answers rudely, says he wants only unpleasantness for all his kinsmen and says he is withholding what he inherited from his father. There were hard words spoken on both sides. Then they went away, the three kinsmen. They go to Straumsey; it is the most thickly populated of the Faroes. A man had his dwelling there who was called Þórhallr the Wealthy. He had a wife who was called Birna and was known as Straumsey-Birna; she was a great shrew and a fine-looking woman. Þórhallr was now noticeably an old man. Birna had been married for money. Þórhallr had money owed him by nearly everybody, and in many cases he was paid back little. The three, Sigurðr, Þórðr and Gautr, come to Straumsey and go to speak with farmer Þórhallr. Sigurðr makes him an offer to collect his money for a half share of the outstanding debts that were most difficult to collect, and the farmer a half share as his portion, but if he needed to take formal legal steps, then he wished to get what was necessary for these steps for his labour. Þórhallr thought this was harsh, and yet this is what their bargain turned out to be. Sigurðr now travels widely round the Faroes and gathers Þórhallr’s money together, and takes legal steps when he found this necessary. He soon gets a great deal of money from this, so that it soon makes him wealthy from it. Sigurðr stays now for long periods, and all the kinsmen too, with Þórhallr. Frequently Sigurðr and Birna happen to be talking together, and people say that there must be seduction going on with them. They stay there over the winter. In the spring Sigurðr says that he would like to set up a joint household with Þórhallr, though he was rather unenthusiastic about this, until the housewife got involved; then the farmer changed his mind and let the housewife have her way. Then she and Sigurðr boldly took control; Þórhallr is now thrown overboard, and she and Sigurðr arrange everything the way they wanted it.

CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE

IT CAME TO PASS IN THE SUMMER that a ship came to the Faroes land and was dashed to pieces on Suðrey, and much property was lost, and there were twelve men on the ship and five were lost, but seven reached land safely. One was called Hafgrímr, and Bjarngrímr and Hergrímr. They were all brothers and were skippers. They were badly off for food and other things that they needed. Sigurðr, Þórðr and Gautr went to see them and Sigurðr said they were in a bad way, and invites them all to stay with him. Þórhallr came to talk with Birna and felt this had been rather hastily decided. Sigurðr said it should be at his expense. They stayed there and were pretty well treated, and better than Þórhallr. Farmer Þórhallr was stingy, and he and Bjarngrímr often had words about it. Þórhallr was sitting on the long bench and had a stick in his hand; he waved it about when he got talking excitedly and had poor eyesight, and his stick hit Bjarngrímr's nose. He got furious and was going to take up an axe and bring it down on Þórhallr's head. Sigurðr leapt up quickly and took hold of Bjarngrímr and says that he wants to make peace between them. And that is what happens, they are reconciled. They stay there over the winter and have little to do with each other from then on. The winter passed. Sigurðr says that he will make provision for them in some way. He gives them a seaworthy cargo ship which he and Þórhallr owned in common. Þórhallr was again displeased at this, until the housewife made him be quiet. Sigurðr provided them with food, and they went to the ship, they lay on the ship at night, and went back to the farm.

So when they were ready it happened one morning that they were walking back to the farm. Sigurðr was not at home on the farm and was out busy at his usual jobs and doing what he felt needed to be done. Afterwards they stayed there during the day. Sigurðr came home and went to the table; the merchants had by then gone down to the ship. Sigurðr asked, when he got to the table, where farmer Þórhallr was. He was told that he must be asleep.

'That is an unnatural sleep,' says Sigurðr, 'so is he dressed or not? And we want to wait for him for the meal.'

So someone went to the living room, and Þórhallr was lying in his bed and sleeping. Sigurðr was told. He springs up and goes out and to Þórhallr's bed and soon realises that Þórhallr was dead. Sigurðr draws the bedclothes off him and sees that his bed is all bloody and finds a wound under his left arm, and he had been stabbed with a slender blade to the heart. Sigurðr said that this was the worst of deeds.

'And this must have been done by that wretched Bjarngrímr, and he must think he has now avenged the blow with the stick. We shall now go down to the ship and take vengeance on them if it is possible.'

The kinsmen now take their weapons, and Sigurðr has a great axe in his hand, and they run down to the ship, and Sigurðr was raging in his speech; he leapt straightaway out onto the ship. At this moment the brothers spring up when they hear swearing and cursing. Sigurðr leaps at Bjarngrímr and strikes with the axe with both hands into his chest from the front so that the axe sinks deep in. That was an instantaneous death wound. Þórðr the Short strikes at Hafgrímr with his sword onto his shoulder and cuts him right down his whole side and takes off his arm, and he immediately loses his life. Gautr the Red strikes with his axe on Hergrímr's head and cleaves him down to the shoulders. So when they are all dead, then Sigurðr says that he will not do any harm to those that were left, but he says he will take the property the brothers had left, and yet that was not much. Sigurðr and the others go home with this property. He feels he has now avenged farmer Þórhallr properly. But none the less, nasty rumours got around about Sigurðr and all the kinsmen concerning Þórhallr's death. Sigurðr now marries Birna and becomes part of the household there with her. The couple, Þórhallr and Birna, had many children.

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO

THERE WAS A MAN called Þorvaldr; he lived on Sandey. His wife was called Þórbera. He was a wealthy man in property and now getting on in years when these things happened. Gautr the Red comes to Þorvaldr and offers to collect his money, of which little had been received from outstanding debts, and this was their agreement, much on the lines of that between Þórhallr and Sigurðr. Gautr stays in Þorvaldr's household for no shorter periods than with Sigurðr. Soon it comes to be said that Gautr is seducing Þorvaldr's wife. He amasses a lot of money. On one occasion a man turned up who owed Þorvaldr money; it was a certain fisherman. And in the evening it was dark in the living room, and people were sitting there. Then Þorvaldr claimed his money from the fisherman, but he answers reluctantly and rather impolitely. Gautr strolled over the floor and some men as well. But when it was least expected, Þorvaldr spoke:

‘Curse you for stabbing at the breast of an old man and an innocent one.’

He sank down against the panelling and was already dead. And when Gautr heard this he ran straight up to the fisherman and strikes him straightway a death blow, said he should not cause any more mischief. Gautr then becomes part of the widow's household and marries her.

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE

THERE WAS A MAN called Leifr. He was son of Þórir Beinisson. He was engaged in trading voyages between Norway and the Faroes and had plenty of money. He was alternately with Leifr Qzurarson, when he was

in the Faroes, or Þuríðr meginekkja and her sons. Now it came about on one occasion when Leifr Þórisson brought his ship to the Faroes, that Sigurðr Þorláksson invites him to his home on Straumsey, and this is settled between them. Leifr Qzurarson came to the ship and did not take this well, that his namesake had decided to go to Sigurðr's, said it was not what he would have advised, and said he would have been welcome to stay on Suðrey with him. Leifr said the arrangement would now have to stand, and went to stay with Sigurðr, and Sigurðr sat him next to himself and was good to him. He is there over the winter being well cared for.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR

IT IS SAID THAT ONE DAY in the spring Sigurðr said that he was going to collect his money owed by a neighbour of his who was called Björn.

'And I would like, Leifr,' he says, 'you to go with me and witness our agreement, for Björn is very difficult to come to terms with, and I have for a long time been suffering losses at his hands.'

Leifr says he is willing to go as he desired. So the two of them go together to Björn's, and Sigurðr claims his money, but Björn answers rudely. Very soon there is a great row there, and Björn is about to strike at Sigurðr, but Leifr leapt between them, and Björn's axe landed on his head so that it immediately became a killing. Sigurðr then leapt at Björn and struck him a death blow. News of these events is now spread around. Now Sigurðr was the only person able to report what happened. Now there again arose nasty rumours about Sigurðr. The two of them, Þuríðr meginekkja and her daughter Þóra, criticise Leifr Qzurarson harshly for never being willing to lift a hand whatever shameful deeds are committed against them; he is treated with coldness and hostility, but he responded with great and kindly patience. They said his patience was the result of cowardice and inability to take decisive action. The mother and daughter are greatly displeased at the death of Leifr Þórisson; they feel certain that Sigurðr must have killed him.

It is said that on one occasion housewife Þuríðr dreamed that Sigmundur Brestisson came to her, her husband as had been. He spoke to her:

'It is as it appears to you, that I am come here, and this has been permitted to me by God himself,' says he; 'but do not think harshly or badly of your son-in-law Leifr, for it will be granted to him to avenge your disgraces.'

After that Þuríðr wakes up and tells her daughter Þóra her dream, and from then on they are better disposed towards Leifr than before.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE

THIS IS NOW THE NEXT THING to tell, that a ship came from the sea to the Faroes on Straumsey a short distance from Sigurðr's farm.

These were Norwegian men; Arnljótr was the name of the skipper. They were eighteen men on the ship. A man lived by the landing place who was called Skopti. He helped the merchants with their work and served them well; they also liked him. The skipper came to talk with Skopti and said this:

‘I will tell you in confidence,’ he says, ‘that they were my sons, Bjarngrím and his brothers, whom Sigurðr Þorláksson and his brother and cousin killed, and I would like you to assist me in my plans to get hold of Sigurðr and the others and avenge my sons.’

Skopti says he has no favours to repay Sigurðr for, and promised Arnljótr to let him know straight away when there was an opportunity for them against Sigurðr and the others. So on one occasion in the summer the three kinsmen, Sigurðr, Þórðr and Gautr, go out on a boat. They go to an island to fetch animals for slaughter, for it is the custom with the Faroe Islanders to have fresh meat all the year round. So when they were gone, then Skopti lets Arnljótr know about this. They set to straight away, the merchants, and were fifteen together on the merchant ship’s boat and got to the island when Sigurðr’s party were already there and go up onto the island twelve together, while three guarded the ship. Sigurðr and the others saw the men that were come up onto the island and discuss among themselves who they might be. They saw that men were in coloured clothes and had weapons.

‘It may be,’ said Sigurðr, ‘that here are come the merchants that have been anchored here this summer, and it may be that they have other business here than just to hold a market between themselves, and they must have business with us; that is what we must be prepared for. So we shall go towards them and follow the plan used by Sigmundur Brestisson,’ says Sigurðr, ‘and run after that each of us in different directions and all meet together at our ship.’

So they walk towards each other. Arnljótr straight away urges his companions on and bids them avenge his sons. Sigurðr’s party take to flight each in a different direction, and they all get down to the beach to their ship. Then Arnljótr’s party come and attack them. Sigurðr strikes at the one that was attacking him and strikes from under him both legs above the knee, and that one met his death. Þórðr kills another man, and Gautr a third. Then they leap onto their ship and row along the island and find the merchant ship’s boat and three men on it. Sigurðr leaps onto the boat and kills one of them, and drives two into the water; they take the boat and row both vessels away and to their home. Sigurðr gathers men round him and goes out to the island: they go up onto the island. The Easterners run together and intend to defend themselves. Þórðr the Short spoke:

‘The best thing to do, brother Sigurðr, is to give these men quarter, since we can do what we like with them, and we have already caused Arnljótr great loss.’

Sigurðr answers: ‘That is well spoken, but even so I want them to leave everything to my discretion, if they are to have quarter.’

This was carried out, that they gave Sigurðr self-judgment, and he assesses triple wergild against Arnljótr for each of them. Arnljótr paid all this money, and he was a Hebrides man, and he had this in compensation for his sons, and with that went away from the Faroes. Sigurðr got to know of Skopti’s betrayal, and said that he shall keep his life, but go away from the Faroes, and he went to Norway and was outlawed from the Faroes.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

NOW IT HAS TO BE TOLD about this, that Sigurðr Þorláksson urges his brother Þórðr that he should marry. Þórðr asks where he can see a wife for him.

‘I will not pass by the match that seems to me the best here in the Faroes, that is Þuríðr meginekkja.’

‘I do not reckon that is the style for me,’ says Þórðr.

‘You will not get if we do not ask,’ says Sigurðr.

‘I am not going to seek for this one,’ he says, ‘if it will not be likely that she will be willing to be married to me,’ says Þórðr, ‘and yet you can try for this one if you want to.’

So Sigurðr goes the next day to Skúfey and raises this matter before Þuríðr. She does not respond to this immediately, but he urges the matter. And the point is reached at which she says she would consult with her friends and sons and says she will send him word about what was happening. Sigurðr goes home and said everything looked promising about her reply.

‘This looks to be going rather oddly,’ says Þórðr, ‘and I suspect it is not all above board.’

Þuríðr went to see her son-in-law Leifr and her daughter Þóra and told them of the proposal of marriage. Þóra asks how she had answered. She says that she had more or less rejected it, though less firmly than she was minded to.

‘But what do you think advisable, daughter?’

She answers: ‘You will not reject it if I have my way, if it is at all to your mind to use this to achieve vengeance for what has been done to disgrace us, and I do not see any other bait that is more likely to result in them being drawn to it than this. I do not need to put words in my mother’s mouth, because there are many ways in which she can draw them into this so that they do not guess what is happening.’

Leifr is in agreement with Þóra on this matter and says he would take some thought how they may eventually get what they deserved. They fixed a day for themselves when they should come to claim the fulfilment of this plan. Then Leifr spoke:

‘Þrándr had great foresight when he offered fostering to our child, and I think you are responsible for that, Þóra,’ he says, ‘and that will be the death of our son Sigmundr if he is with Þrándr then, when anything happens between us and Sigurðr.’

‘I do not intend,’ says Þóra, ‘that he shall be there long from now on, and it is time for us to go to Austrey and for you to visit your foster-father Þrándr.’

They are all reach agreement about that.

CHAPTER FIFTY-SEVEN

SO LEIFR AND THE OTHER TWO go all together, and they are seven people on a boat and reach Austrey, and during the day the inside of the boat filled with water, and Leifr and the other men got very wet, though Þóra was dry. They walk up to the farm at Gata, and Þrándr welcomes them and has fires lit for Leifr’s party, but Þóra was taken to the living room, and her son, the boy Sigmundr, was there with her. He was now nine winters old, and looked extremely alert. His mother asked what Þrándr had taught him, and he said he had learned how to conduct all lawsuits and claims for compensation for himself and for others. He had all this at his fingertips. Then she asks what his foster-father had taught him in the way of divine learning. Sigmundr said he had learned paternoster and *kredda* (the little creed). She said she wanted to hear them, and he did so, and she thought he chanted paternoster pretty well, but Þrándr’s *kredda* went like this:

I do not go out alone,
four go with me,
five of God’s angels;
I carry a prayer before me,
a prayer for Christ;
I sing seven psalms,
may God see my state.

And at this moment Þrándr comes into the room and asks what they were talking about. Þóra answers and says that her son Sigmundr has been reciting for her the learning that he had taught him.

‘And there seemed to me no sense there,’ she says, ‘in the credo.’

‘This is the way it is, as you know,’ says Þrándr, ‘that Christ had twelve or more disciples and each of them had his own *kredda*; so I have my *kredda*, and you the one that you have learned, and there are many *kreddur*, and these things,’ he said, ‘are not correct in just one way.’

So they end their conversation. In the evening they are very hospitably entertained, and there was some very hard drinking, and Þrándr was extremely cheerful, and Þrándr says that it shall be got ready for them to sleep in the living room and a shakedown made on the floor. Leifr says that this would be fine.

Þóra says that she would like Sigmundr to tell her about his learning and lie by her side during the night.

‘That cannot be,’ says Þrándr, ‘because then I can never sleep at night.’

‘This you must grant me, my dear Þrándr,’ she says.

And so it was, that the boy lies with the others, but Þrándr had a small apartment of his own, and he generally slept there with the boy next to him and few people with him. So Þrándr went to his apartment, and it was now late at night. Leifr was going to go to sleep and lies down and turns away from his wife. She pushes at his back with her hands and tells him not to go to sleep.

‘Get up,’ she says, ‘and go all round Austrey during the night and damage every boat so that it is not seaworthy.’

And they did so. Leifr was acquainted with every inlet there. They damaged every floating vessel so that none was seaworthy. They do not sleep during the night, get up early in the morning. Þóra and the others go straight down to their boat, but Leifr went down to the apartment and bids Þrándr farewell and accept their thanks for hospitable entertainment.

‘And Þóra wishes that Sigmundr should go with her.’

Þrándr had slept little during the night and said that it might not be, that Sigmundr should go away. Leifr goes quickly to the boat, and Þrándr thought he realised now the whole plan of Leifr and the others and tells his men to get a skiff that he had; many men leap onto it. They do so, and coal-black sea pours into it, and the ones are happy that get ashore, and there is no seaworthy ship on the island, and Þrándr has to stay there whether he is pleased or not. Leifr travels on until he gets home and then gathers men to himself, and this is the day before Sigurðr and the others were to meet the following day.

CHAPTER FIFTY-EIGHT

NOW IT IS TO BE TOLD about Sigurðr Þorláksson and his brother, that they set out from home during the day, and he urges that they should be quick. Þórðr says that he is not very keen on going.

‘And I feel that you are doomed,’ he says, ‘that you are so eager for this.’

‘Do not be surprised,’ says Sigurðr, ‘and be not afraid of any danger, and we must certainly not break the appointment we have agreed to.’

‘You shall have your way,’ says Þórðr, ‘but I shall not be surprised if we do not all get home safe this evening.’

They travelled twelve together on a boat and well armed. They met stormy weather during the day and dangerous currents and survived that easily and arrived at Skúfey. Then Þórðr said that he will go no further. Sigurðr says he will go up to the farm though he has to go alone. Then Þórðr said that he must be doomed. Sigurðr goes up onto the island. He was in a red tunic and had a dark cape with ties on his shoulders. He was girded with a sword

and had a helmet on his head. He goes up onto the island, and when he gets nearly up to the buildings, then he sees that the doors are shut. A church stood in the farm enclosure opposite the doors, that Sigmundr had had built. And when Sigurðr came up between the house doors and the church, then he sees that the church is open and a woman is going from the church in a red tunic and a dark cape on her shoulders. Sigurðr recognised that it was housewife Þuríðr there and he turns to her. She greets him in a friendly way and goes to a log that was lying in the farmstead. They sit there on the log, and she wanted to face towards the church, but he wanted to face towards the house doors and away from the church, and she had her way, and they faced the church. Sigurðr asked what people were come. She said there were few people there. He asked whether Leifr was there. She said he was not there.

‘Are your sons at home?’ he says.

‘One could say so,’ she says.

‘What have they said about our business since?’ says Sigurðr.

‘We have talked about it,’ she says, ‘that all of us women like you best, and there would be little delay on my part if you were free.’

‘I have been very unlucky, then,’ says Sigurðr, ‘and that can also soon be changed so that I will be a free man.’

‘That’s as may be,’ she says.

And at that point he wanted to bend her towards himself and put his arms round her, but she drew the cape towards her, and and at that moment the door was opened and a man ran out with drawn sword, and it was Heri Sigmundarson. And when Sigurðr sees this, then he slipped down through the cape and so got free, while Þuríðr was left holding the cape. Now more men came out, and Sigurðr runs down over the fields. Heri grabs up a spear and runs down onto the fields after him and he turns out to be the swiftest. He hurls the spear towards Sigurðr, and Sigurðr sees that the spear is aimed at his shoulders. Then he drops down onto the ground and the spear flies on over him and came to rest in the ground. Sigurðr stands up and grabs the spear and sends it back, and it hits Heri in the middle and he was soon dead. Sigurðr then runs down onto the narrow path, but Leifr comes there where Heri was lying and turns quickly from there and runs from there out to the edge of the island and over the edge there where he came to it, and people say that it is fifteen fathoms¹ distance down there onto the beach. Leifr landed on his feet. He runs to their ship, and Sigurðr is then come to the ship and was going to jump out onto the ship, but Leifr then thrust his sword at him into his side, but he turned towards him, and the sword went right in, as Leifr thought. Sigurðr then leapt out onto the ship, and they made from land, and there they parted. Leifr goes up the island to his men and tells them to go quickly for ships.

¹ A fathom is reckoned to have been 167 cm.

‘And we shall make after them.’

They ask whether he has heard about Heri’s death or has found Sigurðr. He says he had little to say about it for the time being. They leap onto two ships, and Leifr had had eighty men, and their difference in speed was not all that small. Sigurðr’s party come ashore on Straumsey, and Sigurðr had been steering the boat and spoke little to them. So when he was going up from the boat, Þórðr asked whether he would be much wounded. He says he is not exactly certain about that. Sigurðr goes to the wall of the boatshed that was there near the sea and lays his arms up on it, but they empty the boat and afterwards go up to the boatshed and see that Sigurðr is standing there and was now become rigid and was dead. They carried his body home and did not say what had happened. They go to their supper. And while they were at their meal, then Leifr and his party come to the farm and launch an attack on it and set fire to it. They defend themselves well and there are eleven men there, but thirty were come against it. And when the fire began to get a hold on the house, then Gautr the Red leaps out and cannot bear it inside any longer. Steingrímur Sigmundarson attacked him, and two other men, but he defended himself well. Gautr strikes at Steingrímur’s knee and takes off his kneecap—and that was a great wound, so that he walked with a limp ever after—and killed one of his comrades. Then Leifr Qzurarson came up and they exchange blows, and it ends with Leifr killing Gautr. Then Þórðr the Short leaps out and against him Brandr Sigmundarson and two other men and they attacked Þórðr, and it ended with these that Þórðr kills Brandr and both of his companions. Then Leifr Qzurarson came up and thrust the same sword through Þórðr as he had stabbed his brother Sigurðr with previously, and Þórðr soon lost his life.

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE

AFTER THESE EVENTS Leifr goes back home and becomes renowned for these deeds. But when Þrándr heard of these events, then they affected him so deeply that he died of deadly sorrow. Leifr was now sole ruler of all the Faroes, and this was in the time of King Magnús Ólafsson the Good. Leifr went to Norway to see King Magnús and receives from him the Faroes in fief, comes home to the Faroes, lives there until old age. His son Sigmundur lived on Suðrey after his father Leifr and was considered a great man. Housewife Þuríðr and Leifr died in the days of King Magnús, while Þóra was with her son Sigmundur and was always considered the finest of great women. Sigmundur’s son was called Hafgrímur, and there are descended from him Einarr and his son Skeggi, who had been a little while ago king’s stewards in the Faroes. Steingrímur Sigmundarson the Lame lived on Skúfey and was considered a good farmer. And there is nothing further told here of the fate that befell Sigmundur Brestisson or his offspring.

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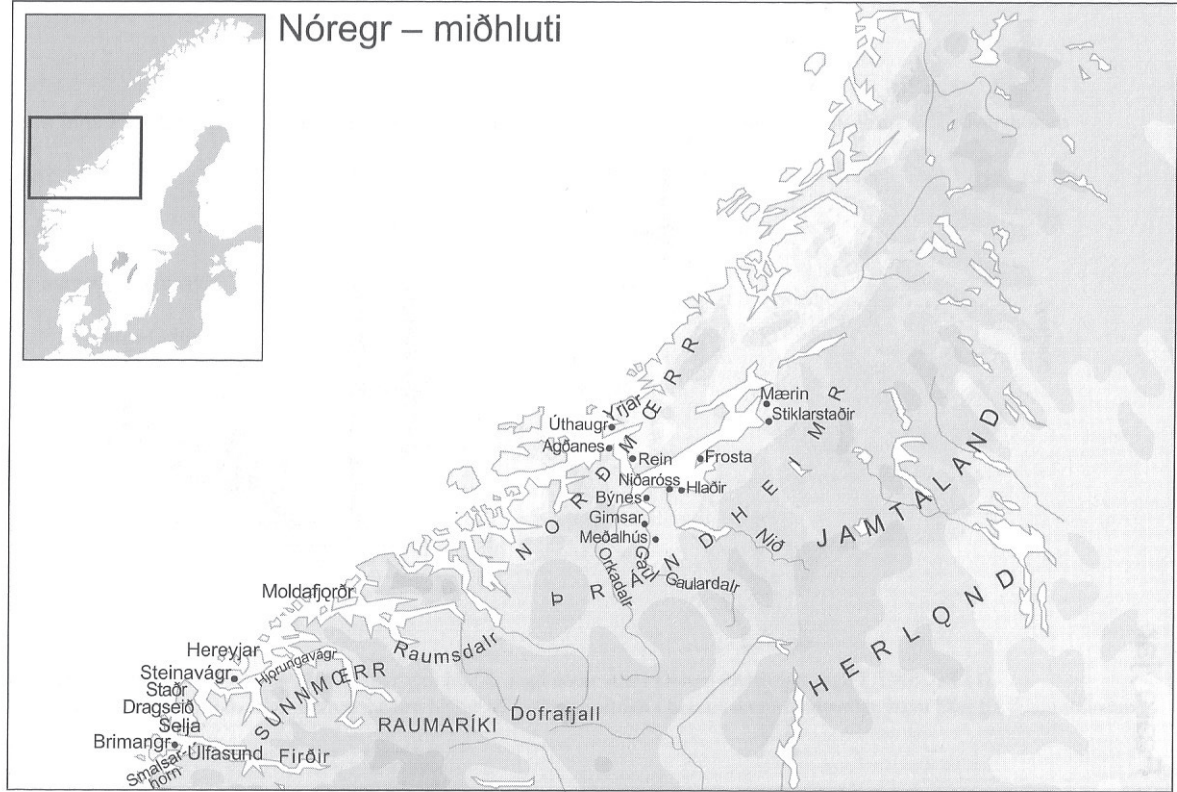
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Færeyjar



Nóregr – miðhluti





Nóregi – nyrsti hluti

