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Völuspá (Prophecy of the Volva, Prophecy of the Seeress) is the first and best known poem of the Poetic Edda. It tells the story of the creation of the world and its coming end related by a völvu or seeress addressing Odin. It is one of the most important primary sources for the study of Norse mythology. The poem is preserved whole in the Codex Regius and Hauksbók manuscripts while parts of it are quoted in the Prose Edda. This is Lee M. Hollander's English translation.

Hear me, all ye hallowed beings,
Both high and low of Heimdall's children:
Thou wilt, Valfather, that I well set forth
The fates of the world which as first I recall.

I call to mind the kin of etins
Which long ago did give me life.
Nine worlds I know, the nine abodes
Of the glorious world-tree the ground beneath.

In earliest times did Ymir live:
Was not sea nor land nor salty waves,
Neither earth was there nor upper heaven,

But a gaping nothing, and green things nowhere.

Was the land then lifted aloft by Bur's sons
Who made Mithgarth, the matchless earth;
Shone from the south the sun on dry land,
On the ground then grew the greensward soft.

From the south the sun, by the side of the moon,
Heaved his right hand over heaven's rim;
The sun knew not what seat he had,
The stars knew not what stead they held,
The moon knew not what might she had.

Then gathered together the gods for counsel,
The holy hosts, and held converse;
To night and new moon their names they gave,
The morning named, and midday also,
Forenoon and evening, to order the year.

On Itha Plain met the mighty gods;
Shrines and temples they timbered high,
They founded forges to fashion gold,
Tongs they did shape and tools they made;

Played at draughts in the garth: right glad they were,
Nor aught lacked they of lustrous gold --
Till maidens three from the thurses came,
Awful in might from etin-home.

Then gathered together the gods for counsel,
The holy hosts, and held converse:
Who the deep-dwelling dwarfs was to make
Of Brimir's blood and Bláin's bones.

Mótsognir rose, mightiest ruler
Of the kin of dwarfs, but Durin next;
Molded many manlike bodies
The dwarfs under earth, as Durin bade them.

Nýi and Nithi, Northri and Suthri,
Austri and Vestri, Althjólf, Dvalin,
Nár and Náin, Níping, Dáin,
Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Nóri,
Án and Onar, Ái, Mjóthvitnir.

Veig and Gandálf, Vindálf, Thráin,
Thekk and Thorin, Thrór, Vit, and Lit,
Nár and Regin, Nýráth and Ráthsvith;
Now is reckoned the roster of dwarfs.

Fíli, Kíli, Fundin, Náli,
Heptifíli, Hanar, Svíur,
Frár, Hornbori, Fræg and Lóni,
Aurvang, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.

The dwarfs I tell now in Dvalin's host,
Down to Lofar -- for listening wights --
They who hied them from halls of stone
Over sedgy shores to sandy plains.

There was Draupnir and Dólgthrasir,
Hár and Haugspori, Hlévang, Glói,
Skirvir, Virvir, Skafith, Ái,
Álf and Yngvi, Eikinskjaldi,

Fjalar and Frosti, Finn and Ginnar.
Will ever be known, while earth doth last,
The lines of dwarfs to Lofar down.

To the coast then came, kind and mighty,
From the gathered gods three great Æsir;
On land they found, of little strength,
Ask and Embla, unfated yet.

Sense they possessed not, soul they had not,
Being nor bearing, nor blooming hue;
Soul gave Óthin, sense gave Hönir,
Being, Lóthur, and blooming hue.

An ash I know, hight Yggdrasil,
The mighty tree moist with white dews;
Thence come the floods that fall down;
Evergreen o'ertops Urth's well this tree.

Thence wise maidens three betake them --
Urth one is hight, the other, Verthandi,
Skuld the third: they scores did cut,
They laws did make, they lives did choose:
For the children of men they marked their fates.

I ween the first war in the world was this,
When the gods Gullveig gashed with their spears,
And in the hall of Hár burned her --
Three times burned they the thrice reborn,
Ever and anon: even now she liveth.

Heith she was hight where to houses she came,
The wise seeress, and witchcraft plied --
Cast spells where she could, cast spells on the mind:
To wicked women she was welcome ever.

Then gathered together the gods for counsel,

The holy hosts, and held converse:
Should the Æsir a truce with tribute buy,
Or should all gods share in the feast.

His spear had Óthin sped o'er the host:
The first of feuds was thus fought in the world;
Was broken in battle the breastwork of Ásgarh,
Fighting Vanir trod the field of battle.

Then gathered together the gods for counsel,
The holy hosts, and held converse:
Who had filled the air with foul treason,
And to uncouth etins Óth's wife given.

Thewy Thór then overthrew the foe --
He seldom sits when of such he hears:
Were sworn oaths broken, and solemn vows,
Gods' plighted troth, the pledges given.

Where Heimdall's horn is hid, she knows,
Under heaven-touching, holy world-tree;
On it are shed showery falls
From Fjolnir's pledge: know ye further, or how?

Alone she sat out when the lord of gods,
Óthin the old, her eye did seek:
What seekest thou to know, why summon me?
Well know I, Ygg, where thy eye is hidden:
In the wondrous well of Mímir;
Each morn Mímir his mead doth drink
Out of Fjolnir's pledge: know ye further, or how?

Gave Ygg to her arm rings and gems
For her seeress' sight and soothsaying:

The fates I fathom, yet farther I see,
See far and wide the worlds about.

The valkyries' flock from afar she beholds,
Ready to ride to the realm of men:
Skuld held her shield, Skogul likewise,
Guth, Hild, Gondul, and Geirskogul:
For thus are hight Herjan's maidens,
Ready to ride o'er reddened battlefields.

I saw for Baldr, the blessed god,
Ygg's dearest son, what doom is hidden:
Green and glossy, there grew aloft,
The trees among, the mistletoe.

The slender-seeming sapling became
A fell weapon when flung by Hoth;
But Baldr's brother was born full soon:
But one night old slew him Óthin's son.

Neither cleansed his hands nor combed his hair
Till Baldr's slayer he sent to Hel;
But Frigg did weep in Fensalir
The fateful deed: know ye further, or how?

A captive lies in the kettle-grove,
Like to lawless Loki in shape;
There sits Sigyn, full sad in mind,
By her fettered mate: know ye further, or how?

From the east there flows through fester-dales,
A stream hight Slíth, filled with swords and knives.

Waist-deep wade there through waters swift

Mainsworn men and murderous,
Eke those who betrayed a trusted friend's wife;
There gnaws Níthhogg naked corpses,
There the Wolf rends men -- wit ye more, or how?

Stood in the north on the Nitha Fields
A dwelling golden which the dwarfs did own;
Another stood on Ókólnir,
That etin's beer-hall, who is Brimir hight.

A hall she saw, from the sun so far,
On Ná Strand's shore: turn north its doors;
Drops of poison drip through the louver,
It walls are clad with coiling snakes.

In the east sat the old one, in the Iron-Woods,
Bred there the bad brood of Fenrir;
Will one of these, worse than they all,
The sun swallow, in seeming a wolf.

He feeds on the flesh of fallen men,
With their blood sullies the seats of the gods;
Will grow swart the sunshine in summers thereafter,
The weather, woe-bringing: do ye wit more, or how?

His harp striking, on hill there sat
Gladsome Eggthér, he who guards the ogress;
O'er him gaily in the gallows tree
Crowed the fair red cock which is Fjalar hight.

Crowed o'er the gods Gullinkambi;
Wakes he the heroes who in Herjan dwell;
Another crows the earth beneath
In the halls of Hel, of hue dark red.

Garm bays loudly before Gnipa cave,
Breaks his fetters and freely runs.
The fates I fathom, yet farther I see:
Of the mighty gods the engulfing doom.

Brothers will battle to bloody end,
And sisters' sons their sibs betray;
Woe's in the world, much wantonness;
Axe-age, sword-age -- sundered are shields --
Wind-age, wolf-age, ere the world crumbles;
Will the spear of no man spare the other.

Mímir's sons dance; the downfall bodes
When blares the gleaming Gjallarhorn;
Loud blows Heimdall, with horn aloft;
In Hel's dark hall horror spreadeth,
Once more Óthin with Mím's head speaketh
Ere Surt's sib swallows him.

Trembles the towering tree Yggdrasil,
It leaves sough loudly: unleashed is the etin.

What ails the Æsir and what the alfs?
In uproar all etins -- are the Æsir met.
At the gates of their grots the wise dwarfs groan
In their fell fastnesses: wit ye further, or how?

Garm bays loudly before Gnipa cave,
Breaks his fetters and freely runs.
The fates I fathom, yet farther I see:
Of the mighty gods the engulfing doom.

Fares Hrym from the east, holding his shield;

The Mithgarth-Worm in mighty rage
Scatters the waves; screams the eagle,
His nib tears the dead; Naglfar loosens.

Sails a ship from the east with shades from Hel;
O'er the ocean stream steers it Loki;
In the wake of the Wolf rush witless hordes
Who with baleful Byleist's brother do fare.

Comes Surt from the south with the singer-of-twigs,
The war god's sword like a sun doth shine;
The tall hills totter, the trolls stagger,
Men fare to Hel, the heavens rive.

Another woe awaiteth Hlín,
When forth goes Óthin to fight the Wolf,
And the slayer of Beli to battle with Surt:
Then Frigg's husband will fall lifeless.

Strides forth Víthar, Valfather's son,
The fearless fighter, Fenrir to slay;
To the heart he hews the Hvethrungs's son;
Avenged is then Víthar's father.

Comes then Mjolnir's mighty wielder;
Gapes the grisly earth-girdling Serpent
When strides forth Thór to stay the Worm.

Mightily mauls Mithgarth's warder --
Shall all wights in the world wander from home -- ;
Back falls nine steps Fjorgyn's offspring --
Nor fears for his fame -- from the frightful worm.

'Neath sea the land sinketh, the sun dimmeth,

From the heavens fall the fair bright stars;
Gusheth forth stream and gutting fire,
To very heaven soar the hurtling flames.

Garm bays loudly before Gnipa cave,
Breaks his fetters and freely runs.
The fates I fathom, yet farther I see:
Of the mighty gods the engulfing doom.

I see green again with growing things
The earth arise from out of the sea;
Fell torrents flow, overflies them the eagle,
On hoar highlands which hunts for fish.

Again the Æsir on Itha Plain meet,
And speak of the mighty Mithgarth-Worm --
Again go over the great world-doom,
And Fimbultýr's unfathomed runes.

Then in the grass the golden figures,
The far-famed ones, will be found again,
Which they had owned in olden days.

On unsown acres the ears will grow.
All ill grow better; will Baldr come then.
Both he and Hoth will in Hropt's hall dwell,
The war gods' fane: do ye wit more, or how?

Then will Hönir handle the blood-wands,
And Ygg's brothers' sons will forever dwell
In wide Wind-Home: do ye wit more, or how?

I see a hall than the sun more fair,
Thatched with red gold, which is Gimlé hight.

There will the gods all guiltless throne,
And live forever in ease and bliss.

Adown cometh to the doom of the world
The great godhead which governs all.

Comes the darksome dragon flying,
Níthhogg, upward from the Nitha fells;
He bears in his pinions as the plains he o'erflies,
Naked corpses: now he will sink.

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