

THE STORY OF HALFDAN THE  
BLACK.



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## CHAPTER I. HALFDAN FIGHTS WITH GANDALF AND SIGTRYGG.

**H**ALFDAN was one winter old when his father fell. Asa, his mother, went forth with west to Agdir, and straightway betook her to the realm her father Harald had had. There waxed Halfdan, and was big and strong even in his early years, and black-haired withal ; he was called Halfdan the Black. When he was eighteen winters old he took the rule in Agdir, and straightway he went to Westfold and shared the realm with Olaf his brother.

That same autumn he went with an army to Vingulmark against King Gandalf, and many battles they had together, and now one, now the other had the victory ; but in the end they made peace in such wise, that Halfdan was to have the half of Vingulmark that his father Gudrod had had. Thereafter fared King Halfdan up into Raumrick, and laid it unto him ; whereof heard King Sigtrygg, the son of King Eystein, who as then abode in Heathmark, and had aforetime subdued Raumrick. Then went King Sigtrygg with an host against

King Halfdan, and a great battle befell, and King Halfdan gained the day. So as the host broke into flight was King Sigtrygg smitten by an arrow under the left armpit, and he fell there. Thereafter King Halfdan laid all Raumrick under him. Eystein was another son of King Eystein, and the brother of King Sigtrygg, and was then king in Heathmark; and whenas King Halfdan was gone west to Westfold, King Eystein went with his host west to Raumrick, and laid the land there under him far and wide.

## CHAPTER II. BATTLES BETWEEN HALFDAN AND EYSTEIN.

**H**ALFDAN THE BLACK heard that there was war in Raumrick, so he drew an host together, and fared into Raumrick to meet King Eystein, and they had a battle there, and Halfdan gained the day, and Eystein fled away up into Heathmark. King Halfdan followed after him up into Heathmark with his host, and they had another battle there, and Halfdan prevailed; but Eystein fled north into the Dales to Gudbrand the Hersir. Thence he gat together men, and went in the winter out into Heathmark, and met Halfdan in a great island which lies amidst the lake of Miors; there had they battle, and many men fell on either side, but Halfdan gained the day. There fell Guthorm, the son of Gudbrand the Hersir, who was deemed the hopefulest man of the Uplands. Then Eystein fled again north into the Dales, and sent Hallvard Rascal, his kinsman, to meet King

Halfdan and bespeak peace with him. So for kinship's sake King Halfdan gave up to King Eystein the half of Heathmark even as those kinsfolk had owned it aforetime ; but Halfdan brought Thotn under him, and the place called the Land, and he gained to him Hadaland also, and was withal an exceeding mighty king.

### CHAPTER III. THE WEDDING OF HALFDAN THE BLACK.

**H**ALFDAN THE BLACK took to wife a woman named Ragnhild, the daughter of Harald Gold-beard, King of Sogn ; a son they had, to whom the king Harald gave his own name, and the child was reared at Sogn, in the house of King Harald, his mother's father. But whenas Harald was clean worn out by years, and was childless, he gave his realm to Harald, his daughter's son, and let him be made king, and a little after died Harald Gold-beard. That same winter died Ragnhild his daughter ; and the spring after King Harald the Young fell sick and died in Sogn, when he was already ten years old. But as soon as Halfdan the Black heard of his death, he went his ways with a great host, and came north to Sogn, and was well taken to by folk ; so there he claimed for himself the kingdom and heritage after his son, nor was there any to withstand him, and so he brought that realm under him. Then came to him Atli the Slender, Earl of Gaular, who was a friend of King Halfdan, and the king set this Earl Atli over the folk of Sogn to be judge

there by the law of the land, and to gather together the scat for the king's hands. Then went King Halfdan thence to his kingdom in the Uplands.

#### CHAPTER IV. BATTLE BETWIXT HALFDAN AND GANDALF'S SONS.

**K**ING HALFDAN went in the autumn out to Vingulmark; and so on a night whenas King Halfdan was a-feasting, there came to him at midnight the man who had holden the horse-ward, and told him that an host was come nigh to the stead. Then the king arose straightway, and bade his men arm, and therewith he went without and arrayed them. But even therewith were come thither Hysing and Helsing, the sons of Gandalf, with a great host, and there was a great battle. But whereas King Halfdan was overborne by multitude, he must needs flee away to the woods, having lost many men: there fell Olvir the Sage, his foster-father. Thereafter much folk drew toward King Halfdan, and he went to seek the sons of Gandalf, and met them at Eydi by the Eyna-skerries, and there they fought, and Hysing and Helsing fell, but Haki their brother fled away. After that King Halfdan laid all Vingulmark under him; but Haki fled into Elfhome.

## CHAPTER V. THE LATER WEDDING OF KING HALFDAN WITH THE DAUGHTER OF SIGURD HART.

**S**IGURD HART was the name of a king of Ringrick; he was bigger and stronger than any other man, and the fairest to look on of all men. His father was Helgi the Keen, but his mother was Aslaug, the daughter of Sigurd Worm-in-Eye, the son of Ragnar Lodbrok.

So tells the tale, that Sigurd was but twelve winters old when he slew Hildibrand the Bareserk and the whole twelve of them in single combat; many a work of fame he won, and long is the tale told of him. Now Sigurd had two children: Ragnhild was the name of his daughter, the grandest of all women, and she was at this tide twenty years old; but Guthorm, her brother, was but a youngling. Now it is told about the death of King Sigurd, that he would ride out alone into the wild-woods, even as his wont was: for he would hunt beasts great and hurtful to men, and exceeding eager he was herein.

So on a day whenas Sigurd had ridden a long way, he came into a certain clearing near by Hadaland, and there came against him Haki the Bareserk with thirty men, and they fought there. There fell Sigurd Hart, and twelve men of Haki, and he himself lost his hand and had three other wounds. Thereafter rode Haki with his men to the dwelling of Sigurd, and took there Ragnhild his daughter, and Guthorm her brother, and had

them away with him, with much wealth and many goodly things, and bore them home to Hadaland, where he had great manors. Then he let array a feast, and was minded to wed Ragnhild, but the matter was stayed, because it went ill with his hurts.

So Haki the Hadaland-bareserk lay wounded through harvest-tide, and till winter began.

But at Yuletide King Halfdan was guesting in Heathmark, and had heard all these tidings. So on a morning early, when the king was clad, he called to him Harek the Wolf, and bade him fare over to Hadaland, and bring him Ragnhild, the daughter of Sigurd Hart. Harek arrayed him, and had a company of an hundred men. So he sped his journey, that in the grey of the morning they came over the water to Haki's stead, and took all the doors of the hall wherein the housecarles slept. Then went they to Haki's sleeping-bower, and brake it open, and took thenceaway Ragnhild and Guthorm her brother, and all the wealth that was there, and the hall and all men therein they burnt up. Then they tilted over a wain in most seemly wise, and set Ragnhild therein and Guthorm, and so went their ways back unto the ice.

Haki arose and went after them awhile, but when he came to the frozen water, then he set the hilts of his sword downward, and fell on the point thereof, so that the sword ran through him, and there he gat his bane; and he is buried there on the water-bank.

Now King Halfdan saw how they fared over the ice, for he was the keenest-eyed of all men,



and when he saw the tilted wain, he deemed full surely that their errand had sped as he would have it; so he let lay out the tables, and sent men wide through the country-side and bade many men to him; and good feast there was holden that day, for at that feast King Halfdan wedded Ragnhild, and she was a mighty queen thereafter. Now the mother of Ragnhild was Thorny, daughter of Klack-Harald, the King of Jutland, and sister of Thyri Denmark's Weal, the wife of King Gorm the Old, King of the Danes, who swayed the Dane-  
realm in those days.

#### CHAPTER VI. OF RAGNHILD'S DREAM.

QUEEN RAGNHILD dreamed great dreams, for wise of wit she was; and this was a dream of hers: She thought she stood in her grass-garth, and took a thorn out of her smock; and even whiles she held it, it waxed so, that it grew into a great rod, so that one end smote down into the earth and struck fast root therein; but the other end of the tree went high up aloft; and even therewith it seemed to her a tree so great that she might scarce see over it; yea, and wondrous thick it was: now the lower part of this tree was red as blood, but the bole thereof fair-green, and goodly, and the limbs up about as white as snow. Many and great branches there were on the tree, some aloft and some alow; and the limbs of the tree were so great, that she deemed they spread all over Norway; yea, and far wider yet.

## CHAPTER VII. THE DREAM OF HALFDAN.

**K**ING HALFDAN dreamed never; and he deemed that a wondrous thing, and opened his mind on it to a man named Thorleif the Sage, and sought rede of him how to amend it. Thorleif told him what he was wont to do if he were curious in any matter, to wit, that he went to sleep in a swine-sty, and then lacked not ever of dreams. So the king did so, and this dream came to him: for he thought he had the fairest hair of any man, and it all fell in locks, some low down till they touched the earth, some to mid-leg, some to the knee, some to the loins or the midst of his side, some to the neck of him, and some but just springing up from his head like little horns; of diverse hues were these locks, but one lock prevailed above all the others for fairness and brightness and greatness.

So he told his dream to Thorleif, and he apered it in such wise, that great offspring would come of him, and that his kin would rule over lands with great honour, yet not all with the like honour, and that one would come of his kin greater and higher than all: and men hold it for sooth that that lock must betoken King Olaf the Holy.

Now King Halfdan was a wise man, trusty and upright; he made laws, and heeded them himself, and made all others heed them, lest the high hand should overthrow the law. He himself made a tale of blood-guilts, and settled duly

the weregilds for each man after his birth and dignity.

Now Queen Ragnhild bore a son, and he was sprinkled with water and named Harald, and he speedily grew big, and the fairest that might be: there he waxed, and was of right great prowess from his early days, and well stored with wit and wisdom; his mother loved him much, but his father not so much.

#### CHAPTER VIII. THE VANISHING OF HALFDAN'S MEAT.

**K**ING HALFDAN was abiding through Yule-tide in Hadaland, and a marvel befell there on Yule-eve, whenas men had gone to table, and there were many men there. For lo, all the victual vanished from off the boards and all the good drink withal: so the king sat behind heavy of mood, and every man else made for his own home. But the king, to the end that he might know what had brought this thing about, let take a certain Finn, who was a great wizard, and would wring a true tale out of him, and tormented him, but gat nought of him.

Now the Finn cried ever for help on Harald, the king's son, and Harald prayed grace for him and gat it not; yet Harald delivered him, and let him go his ways, against the will of the king, and followed after him himself. So they came on their journey to where a lord held a great feast, and by seeming had goodly welcome there. So when they had abided there till spring-tide, then

spake the Lord to Harald on a day, and said : "Great todo maketh thy father of his loss, in that we took a little victual from him last winter ; but with a fair tale will I reward thee that. Lo now, thy father is dead, and thou shalt go thy ways home, and thou wilt get to thee all the realm that thy father had, and therewith shalt thou become the Lord of all Norway."

## CHAPTER IX. THE DEATH OF KING HALFDAN.

**H**ALFDAN THE BLACK drave from a feast at Hadaland, and the road led him in such wise that he drave over the water of Rand. Spring-tide it was, and the sun was thawing all swiftly ; so as they drave over Rykinswick, there in the winter-tide had been wakes for the neat, but the muck had fallen on the ice and made holes therein by reason of the sun's thawing ; but when the king drave thereover, the ice brake under him, and there was King Halfdan lost and much folk with him : he was by then forty years old.

He had been of all others a king of plenteous years ; and so much men made of him, that when they heard he was dead, and his body brought to Ringrick, where folk were minded to bury it, then came great lords from Raumrick and Westfold and Heathmark, and all prayed to have the corpse with them, to lay it in mound among their own folk, deeming that they who got it might look to have plenteous years therewith : so at last they

agreed to share the body in four, and the head was laid in mound at Stone, in Ringrick. Then of the others each took away their share, and laid it in mound; and all the mounds are called Halfdan's mounds.

... to show the body in front of the ...  
... in a ...  
... the ...  
... all the ...