Havamal Reflection Journal

Stanzas 1 - 95

Within the gates | ere a man shall go,
(Full warily let him watch,)
Full long let him look about him:
For little he knows | where a foe may lurk,
And sit in the seats within.

Hail to the giver! | A guest has come:
Where shall the stranger sit?
Swift shall he be who, | with swords shall try
The proof of his might to make.

Fire he needs | who with frozen knees
Has come from the cold without;
Food and clothes | must the farer have,
the man from the mountains come.

Water and towels | and welcoming speech
Should he find who comes to the feast;
If renown he would get, | and again be greeted,
Wisely and well must he act.

Wits must he have | who wanders wide,
But all is easy at home;
At the witless man | the wise shall wink
When among such men he sits.

A man shall not boast | of his keenness of mind,
But keep it close in his breast;
To the silent and wise | does ill come seldom
When he goes as guest to a house;
(For a faster friend | one never finds
Than wisdom tried and true.)

The knowing guest | who goes to the feast,
In silent attention sits;
With his ears he hears, | with his eyes he watches,
Thus wary are wise men all.

Happy the one | who wins for himself
Favor and praises fair;
Less safe by far | is the wisdom found
That is hid in another's heart.

Happy the man | who has while he lives
Wisdom and praise as well,
For evil counsel | a man full oft
Has from another's heart.

A better burden | may no man bear
For wanderings wide than wisdom;
It is better than wealth | on unknown ways,
And in grief a refuge it gives.

A better burden | may no man bear
For wanderings wide than wisdom;
Worse food for the journey | he brings not afield
Than an over-drinking of ale.

Less good there lies | than most believe
In ale for mortal men;
For the more he drinks | the less does man
Of his mind the mastery hold.

Over beer the bird | of forgetfulness broods,
And steals the minds of men;
With the heron's feathers | fettered I lay
And in Gunnloth's house was held.

Drunk I was, | I was dead-drunk,
When with Fjalar wise I was;
'Tis the best of drinking | if back one brings
His wisdom with him home.

The song of a king | shall be silent and wise,
And bold in battle as well;
Bravely and gladly | a man shall go,
Till the day of his death is come.

The sluggard believes | he shall live forever,
If the fight he face snot;
But age shall not grant him | the gift of peace,
Though spears may spare his life.

The fool is agape | when he comes to the feast.
He stammers or else is still;
But soon if he gets | a drink it is seen
What the mind of a man is like.

He alone is aware | who has wandered wide,
And far abroad has fared,
How great a mind | is guided by him
That wealth of wisdom has.

Shun not the man, | but drink in measure;
Speak to the point or be still;
For rudeness none | shall rightly blame thee
If soon thy bed thou sleekest.

The greedy man, | if his mind be vague,
Will eat till sick he is;
The vulgar man, | when among the wise,
To scorn by his belly is brought.

The herds know well | when home they shall fare.
And then from the grass they go;
But the foolish man | his belly's measure
Shall never know aright.

A paltry man | and poor of mind
At all things ever mocks;
For never he knows, | what he ought to know,
That he is not free from faults.

The witless man | is awake all night,
Thinking of many things;
Care-worn he is | when the morning comes,
And his woe is just as it was.

The foolish man | for friends all those
Who laugh at him will hold;
When among the wise | he marks it not
Though hatred of him they speak.

The foolish man | for friends all those
Who laugh at him will hold;
But the truth when he comes | to the council he learns,
That few in his favor will speak.

An ignorant man | thinks that all he knows,
When he sits by himself in a corner;
But never what answer | to make he knows,
When others with questions come.

A witless man, | when he meets with men,
Had best in silence abide;
For no one shall find | that nothing he knows,
If his mouth is not open too much.
(But a man knows not, | if nothing he knows,
When his mouth has been open too much.)

Wise shall he seem | who well can question,
And also answer well;
Nought is concealed | that men may say
Among the sons of men.

Often he speaks | who never is still
With words that win no faith;
The babbling tongue, | if a bridle it find not,
Oft for itself sings ill.

In mockery no one | a man shall hold,
Although he fare to the feast;
Wise seems one oft, | if nought he is asked,
And safely he sits dry-skinned.

Wise a guest holds it | to take to his heels,
When mock of another he makes;
But little he knows | who laughs at the feast,
Though he mocks in the midst of his foes.

Friendly of mind | are many men,
Till feasting they mock at their friends;
To mankind a bane | must it ever be
When guests together strive.

Oft should one make | an early meal,
Nor fasting come to the feast;
Else he sits and chews | as if he would choke,
And little is able to ask.

Crooked and far | is the road to a foe,
Though his house on the highway be;
But wide and straight | is the way to a friend,
Though far away he fare.

Forth shall one go, | nor stay as a guest
In a single spot forever;
Love becomes loathing | if long one sits
By the hearth in another's home.

Better a house, | though a hut it be,
A man is master at home;
A pair of goats | and a patched-up roof
Are better far than begging.

Better a house, | though a hut it be,
A man is master at home;
His heart is bleeding | who needs must beg
When food he fain would have.

Away from his arms | in the open field
A man should not fare a foot;
For never he knows | when the need for a spear
Shall arise on the distant road.

If wealth a man | has won for himself,
Let him never suffer in need;
Of the saves for a foe | what he plans for a friend,
For much goes worse than we wish.

None so free with gifts | or food have I found
That gladly he took not a gift,
Nor one who so widely | scattered his wealth
That of recompense hatred he had.

Friends shall gladden each other | with arms and garments,
As each for himself can see;
Gift-givers' friendships | are longest found,
If fair their fates may be.

To his friend a man | a friend shall prove,
And gifts with gifts requite;
But men shall mocking | with mockery answer,
And fraud with falsehood meet.

To his friend a man | a friend shall prove,
To him and the friend of his friend;
But never a friend | shall friendship make
With one of his foeman's friends.

If a friend thou hast | whom thou fully wilt trust,
And good from him wouldst get,
Thy thoughts with his mingle, | and gifts shalt thou make,
And fare to find him oft.

If another thou hast | whom thou hardly wilt trust,
Yet good from him wouldst get,
Thou shalt speak him fair, | but falsely think,
And fraud with falsehood requite.

So is it with him | whom thou hardly wilt trust,
And whose mind thou mayst not know;
Laugh with him mayst thou, | but speak not they mind,
Like gifts to his shalt though give.

Young was I once, | and wandered alone,
And nought of the road I knew;
Rich did I feel | when a comrade I found,
For man is man's delight.

The lives of the brave | and noble are best,
Sorrows they seldom feed;
But the coward fear | of all things feels,
And not gladly the miser gives.

My garments once | in a field I gave
To a pair of carven poles;
Heroes they seemed | when clothes they had,
But the naked man is nought.

On the hillside drear | the fir-tree dies,
All bootless its needles and bark;
It is like a man | whom no one loves, --
Why should his life be long?

Hotter than fire | between false friends
Does friendship five days burn;
When the sixth day comes | the fire cools,
And ended is all the love.

No great thing needs | a man to give,
Oft little will purchase praise;
With half a loaf | and a half-filled cup
A friend full fast I made.

A little sand | has a little sea,
And small are the minds of men;
Though all men are not | equal in wisdom,
Yet half-wise only are all.

A measure of wisdom | each man shall have,
But never too much let him know;
The fairest lives | do those men live
Whose wisdom wide has grown.

A measure of wisdom | each man shall have,
But never too much let him know;
For the wise man's heart | is seldom happy,
If wisdom too great he has won.

A measure of wisdom | each man shall have,
But never too much let him know;
Let no man the fate | before him see,
For so is he freest from sorrow.

A brand from a brand | is kindled and burned,
And fire from fire begotten;
And man by his speech | is known to men,
And the stupid by their stillness.

He must early go forth | who fain the blood
Or the goods of another would get;
The wolf that lies idle | shall win little meat,
Or the sleeping man success.

He must early go forth | whose workers are few,
Himself his work to seek;
Much remains undone | for the morning-sleeper,
For the swift is wealth half won.

Of seasoned shingles | and strips of bark
For the thatch let one know his need,
And how much of wood | he must have for a month,
Or in half a year he will use.

Washed and fed | to the council fare,
But care not too much for they clothes;
Let none be ashamed | of his shoes and hose,
Less still of the steed he rides,
(Though poor be the horse he has.)

When the eagle comes | to the ancient sea,
He snaps and hangs his head;
So is a man | in the midst of a throng,
Who few to speak for him finds.

To question and answer | must all be ready
Who wish to be known as wise;
Tell one they thoughts, | but beware of two, --
All know what is known to three.

The man who is prudent | a measured use
Of the might he has will make;
He finds when among | the brave he fares
That the boldest he may not be.

A man must be watchful | and wary as well,
And fearful of trusting a friend;
Oft for the words | that to others one speaks
He will get but an evil gift.

Too early to many | a meeting I came,
And some too late have I sought;
The beer was all drunk, | or not yet brewed;
Little the loathed man finds.

To their homes men would bid | me hither and yon,
If at meal-time I needed no meat,
Or would hang two hams | in my true friend's house,
Where only one I had eaten.

Fire for men | is the fairest gift,
And power to see the sun;
Health as well, | if a man may have it,
And a life not stained with sin.

All wretched is no man, | though never so sick;
Some from their sons have joy,
Some win it from kinsmen, | and some from their wealth,
And some from worthy works.

It is better to live | than to lie a corpse,
The live man catches the cow;
I saw flames rise | for the rich man's pyre,
And before his door he lay dead.

The lame rides a horse, | the handless is herdsman,
The deaf in battle is bold;
The blind man is better | than one that is burned,
No good can come of a corpse.

A son is better, | though late he be born,
And his father to death have fared;
Memory-stones | seldom stand by the road
Save when kinsman honors his kin.

Two make a battle, | the tongue slays the head;
In each furry coat | a fist I look for.

He welcomes the night | whose fare is enough,
(Short are the yards of a ship,)
Uneasy are autumn nights;
Full oft does the weather | change in a week,
And more in a month's time.

A man knows not, | if nothing he knows,
That gold oft apes begets;
One man is wealthy | and one is poor,
Yet scorn for him none should know.

Among Fitjung's sons | saw I well-stocked folds,--
Now bear they the beggar's staff;
Wealth is as swift | as a winking eye,
Of friends the falsest it is.

Cattle die, | and kinsmen die,
And so one dies one's self;
But a noble man | will never die,
If good renown one gets.

Cattle die, | and kinsmen die,
And so one dies one's self;
One thing now | that never dies,
The fame of a dead man's deeds.

Certain is that | which is sought from runes,
That the gods so great have made.
And the Master-Poet painted;
……..of the race of gods;
Silence is safest and best.

An unwise man, | if a maiden's love
Or wealth he chances to win.
His pride will wax, but his wisdom never,
Straight forward he fares in conceit.

Give praise to the day at evening, | to a woman on her pyre,
To a weapon which is tried, | to a maid at wed lock,
To ice when it is crossed, | to ale that is drunk.

When the gale blows hew wood, | in fair winds seek the water;
Sport with maidens at dusk, | for day's eyes are many;
From the ship seek swiftness, | from the shield protection,
Cuts from the sword, | from the maiden kisses.

By the fire drink ale, | over ice go on skates;
Buy a steed that is lean, | and a sword when tarnished,
The horse at home fatten, | the hound in they dwelling.

A man shall trust not | the oath of a maid,
Nor the word a woman speaks;
For their hearts on a whirling | wheel were fashioned,
And fickle their breasts were formed.

In a breaking bow | or a burning flame,
A ravening wolf | or a croaking raven,
In a grunting boar, | a tree with roots broken,
In billowy seas | or a bubbling kettle,

In a flying arrow | or falling waters,
In ice new formed | or the serpent's folds,
In a bride's bed-speech | or a broken sword,
In the sport of bears | or in sons of kings,

In a calf that is sick | or a stubborn thrall,
A flattering witch | or a foe new slain.

In a brother's slayer, | if thou meet him abroad,
In a half-burned house, | in a horse full swift –
One leg is hurt | and the horse is useless –
None had ever such faith | as to trust them all.

Hope not too surely | for early harvest,
Nor trust too soon in they son;
The field needs good weather, | the son needs wisdom,
And oft is either denied.

The love of women | fickle of will
Is like starting o'er ice | with a steed unshod,
A two-year old restive | and little tamed,
Or steering a rudderless | ship in a storm,
Or, lame, hunting reindeer | on slippery rocks.

Clear now will I speak, | for I know them both,
Men false to women are found;
When fairest we speak, | then falsest we think,
Against wisdom we work with deceit.

Soft words shall he speak | and wealth shall he offer
Who longs for a maiden's love,
And the beauty praise | of the maiden bright;
He wins whose wooing is best.

Fault for loving | let no man find
Ever with any other;
Oft the wise are fettered, | where fools go free,
By beauty that breeds desire.

Fault with another | let no man find
For what touches many a man;
Wise men oft | into witless fools
Are made by mighty love.

The head alone knows | what dwells near the heart,
A man knows his mind alone;
No sickness is worse | to one who is wise
Than to lack the longed-for joy.