

The Saga of Grímnir Southpaw

There was a great Ulven warrior named Grímnir Softpaw. He was a skilled leader, cunning and bold in his strategies on raids, and brought great honor to his pack. His flesh was carved with the deeds he had performed, that even those with no ears might know the honor he had brought to his pack, and his stature was tall.

Grímnir had a mate named Fastny. She was a great healer who understood the ways of marking flesh and the secrets that were found in these markings. With his leadership and her cunning, Pack Softpaw were rightly feared within their clan for their ferocity in battle and the bravery of their warriors against the bite of the foes blades. In raids, they took many great victories and sagas were written of these deeds.

When autumn came, Grímnir and Fastny traveled to the meeting of their Clan, where plans for the raids and battles of spring were to be determined. The Clanleader was Andsvarr Grimward, a great and honorable warrior. He commanded the packs of his Clan through blood, deed, and word, and was reckoned as the greatest of the Grimward.

When the time came to plan the raids, Andsvarr spoke these words.

Grím retainers || given to greatness
Regard my words || from the Great Wolf's will
Raíd we will || the lands to the East
East to Everspring || Bitten by our blades
Fear shall find them || Flame of our fury
Thralls and tribute || Returned to our realm
Glorious raiding || with victorious valour

Cubs of the Clan || Your calling comes
Fierce Firewind || Forces will follow

Grim Gallows-breath || Harry their hunters
Great Grimward || Guide Gaia's Chosen
Reverent Riverstone || Recapture our riven
Stout Softpaw || Strengthen our strongholds
Obsidian Owlswing || Take thralls and treasures
United Ulven || Honor awaits all

Grimnir heard these words and grew wrathful. He raised his left arm, and his mate Fastny spoke.

Andsvarr, totem of terror's visage
Your words, wise and wrathful, wrack us with worry
Why wait steely Softpaw in safety
When warriors walk from the west
Driving death towards water's womb?

Andsvarr answered

Fine Fastny, matron to mortification and mystery
To the south sit patient predators
Farms and fields desire doughty defenders
Softpaw stands best as bulwark before them.

This answer did not satisfy Grimnir, who again raised his left arm. Fastny once again spoke.

Andsvarr foe-cleaver, ploughman of warriors
Why must we wait while warriors drive east?
Others offer less in strength
And none match our savage swords
Our armored coats may deflect the rain
But why must it rust while war is waged?

Andsvarr answered thus.

Hold fast, hallowed matron!

Impertinence enters your words.
Threefold these words find you;
As brother to your sons
As leader to your k in
And as first warrior amongst warriors
I bow not to a witch's words.
Would not Gr imn ir bring forth the thoughts
That you so cautiously bring before me?

With these words were spoken, Gr imn ir grew even more wrathful.
Raising his right arm, he spoke.

Andsvarr, fool of fools, you dare insult my mate
To suggest her words are less than truth
Is bitter falsehood, brewed in ashen barrels.
Threefold, I rebuke you
My daughters have no s ister in you
My k in seek my word for battle
And my skill as champion is carved in flesh
Mine and my foes remember
The bite of blades, the sting of arrows
What marks do you bear?
No marks mar your flesh
No ink describes your dedication
To those fallen whose faces you forget.

Andsvarr grew angry at this pronouncement. He dismissed his gathered warriors, and bade them return to their lands in preparation.

When ten days had passed, a message arrived from the lands of the Softpaw. On a blue-black raven, a challenge was issued to Andsvarr Gr imward. He read it, and proclaimed to his most loyal warriors that there was yet a chance that the Softpaw would see

reason and join their raiding. Seeking to forestall bloodshed, he sent a trusted messenger.

Andsvarr had a son named Randveidr. He was broad of shoulder, yet possessed a keen mind with a gift for words. Trusted by Andsvarr, he buckled on his coat of mail and took forth the axe of the Grimward, which has passed from warrior to warrior as a symbol of the clan's ferocity.

Upon the blade of this axe was written the following words.

Unmatched fury || fill this blade
Hewing foes || with blood and bone
Forged in fires || skillful and stark
Of Smidr Grimward || taken to battle
Wounding warriors || with woeful strength
Who may oppose Grimward || no Ulven may stand.

Randveidr came to the lands of the Softpaw and called out to them.

He said, "Warriors of Softpaw, come speak with me. While words may have failed once, there is little reason. More glories come in battle against our foes than in bickering and politics. My father's words sought to glorify you as stalwart defenders of our land, not dishonor your might in battle. The scarred warriors of Softpaw tell their deeds threefold: in word, in action, and in markings of the flesh that mirror the furrows in our lands."

Grimnir came out of his home. He was wearing a linen shirt and carrying his sword.

Grimnir said, "We have been dishonored by your father and so by all of Grimward. There are no more words to be had."

"There must surely be something we can discuss." Said Randveidr.
"Pointed words can be forgotten in time."

Grímnir answered, "But this is a debate that calls for edges, rather than pointed words" and swung his blade.

He struck Randveidr a mighty blow to the midsection with his sword, which was called Harvest. Randveidr's mail shirt was riven in twain, and a great deal of blood began to come forth.

Randveidr looked down and saw that his life's blood was slipping away. Facing his opponent, he said, "It is true that you are a skilled warrior in both battle and debate. I understand the message you wish my father to hear."

Randveidr then fell to the ground, dead. Fastny came forward with a knife and marked Grímnir with an identical cut, pressing the shattered links of mail into the wound to bind it closed. They then both spoke words to the Great Wolf to remember his name.

Randveidr Grímnir | | Son of Andsvarr
You came to us | | holding war in one hand
Seeking peace | | and speaking words with the other
Your intent was honorable | | though you lacked respect
We now list your deeds | | for the great warriors here

Three Ulven fell | | the steel beak sang
In a single blow | | their demise rung forth
The battle of Raven's ridge | | you raised the banners
You set upon your foes | | in tides of blood
The cowardly White Deer | | they live no more

More than a son | | a brother in battle
More than a kinsmen | | a mate to Ingirun

More than a corpse || a father to children
Yet here you lie || mate to a widow
Your life's blood drained || a father to orphans

Great were your skills || Your foe was yet greater
Your deeds unmatched || in the fields of battle
By Grímnir Softpaw || you did find your death
The Great Wolf's forest || calling to you
It has been opened || to travel alone.

"This is the death-song of Randveidr Grímward," said Fastny. "Let it never be forgotten."

With that, his teeth were taken and his body was burned, as befits an honorable ulven warrior. With a length of leather taken from a strong ram, the teeth were bound to the axe with sixteen wraps and it was sent with a messenger to the halls of Andsvarr.