

- 448 Once they had their swords in their hands, just as the queen ordered, mighty Dancwart's face went red with pleasure. "Now let them have the games they want," he said. "Whatever they do, Gunter's safe, we have our weapons, we'll fight together."
- 449 Then Brunhild made it terribly clear how strong she was. Twelve of her men carried into the battle circle a huge round stone, so heavy they barely could do their work, staggering under the weight until they let it fall to the earth.
- 450 After she'd hurled her spear, this was the stone she liked to throw. All the men from Burgundy gasped and sighed. "Dear Lord!" Hagen exclaimed. "The king has chosen a wife! She ought to be down in Hell instead, wed to the Devil himself."
- 451 Quickly, she rolled her sleeves up her clear white arms, clasped one hand in her shield, then raised her great spear high in the air. The games were about to begin. And the look in her eyes worried Gunter and Sifried. The king was facing deadly harm.
- 452 And true enough, without Sifried's aid, plainly Gunter would have been killed. But Sifried gave the king's hand the lightest touch, making Gunter shrink away, completely confused. Brunhild was taking careful aim.
- 453 "What could have touched my hand?" Gunter said to himself, seeing nothing, nor anyone standing beside him there. "It's me, Sifried," he heard, "your dearest friend. I'm here to save you. Have no fear of the queen, so long as you have my help."
- 454 "Quickly, let me have your shield and let it stay in my hands. Be careful, do exactly what I say. You go through all the motions, but leave the work to me." Then Gunter understood and his heart swelled with immense relief.
- 455 "Don't give me away," said Sifried, "stay silent about my magic and Brunhild won't defeat you, or win the high renown

- she thinks she deserves. She isn't expecting my secret tricks. Just see how cheerfully she's standing there and looking down
- 456 "at you!" Using all her strength, the noble girl threw her spear straight at Gunter's shield, hurled so hard that, held steady in Sifried's hand, sparks of fire flew from the steel, blown like wood burning in darkness.
- 457 Razor-sharp, the spear point pierced the broadest, roundest part of the shield, and Sifried's armor gave off a rain of fire. The blow almost forced both men to the ground. The magic cloak kept them alive, saved them from going down.
- 458 Blood came gushing from mighty Sifried's mouth. But then he straightened, wrenched the spear free of his shield, and threw it, meant as it was for the king, hurled it straight at the beautiful girl with Sifried's strength behind it, and back to Brunhild it went.
- 459 He thought: "It wouldn't be good to kill this lovely girl." He swung the spear around, the shaft now its head, and carefully aimed the polished wood at her armor, instead of her face, throwing this less than deadly weapon as hard as he could.
- 460 It hit her armor, and sparks flew as if from a wind. No one could doubt the might and power of Siegmund and Sigelind's son. For all her strength, Brunhild was knocked on her back. Gunter the king was strong, but this was power he notably lacked.
- 461 But beautiful Brunhild quickly jumped to her feet. "I thank you, noble Gunter, mighty knight, for that throw." Frankly, she really thought he had hurled it. But a man of greater strength had secretly, unseen, been the man who made her suddenly anxious.
- 462 Furious, now, she fairly ran to the massive stone. She raised the rock high in her hand, the lovely girl, and using every bit of her strength, made it whirl through the air, then quickly jumped to where it had landed. Her armor groaned

- 463 The stone had gone at least seventy feet, and the gentle maiden had jumped even further. Sifried went to the fallen rock, letting Gunter the king pretend to bend and lift it, while Sigemund's son got himself ready to throw.
- 464 Sifried was tall and very strong, nothing frightened him. The stone flew over Brunhild's starting mark, and he jumped further still. The magic cloak had heightened his powers, so he could leap so far, holding Gunter in his arms.
- 465 He'd thrown the massive rock, everyone saw it fall. He and the king had jumped beyond the stone. And all anyone could see was Gunter. Brunhild was red with anger. Sifried had saved the king from certain death, from mortal danger.
- 466 Seeing Gunter safe and sound at the other end of the circle, Brunhild raised her voice and called to her men: "Quick, come closer, kinsmen, warriors, everyone! Gunter is now your lord and mine. The games are over. He's won."
- 467 Then all her men let their weapons fall from their hands, offering their loyalty to the king who'd conquered their land. Many mighty warriors bent their knees to the man who now would rule them, sure that only his strength had let him win.
- 468 He gave her a charming greeting, aware what courtesy required. She took him by the hand, most properly admitting that her power was gone, had been passed to him. Hagen the bold and brave, now quiet, rejoiced, beholding this.



Do what you can to guard him, my well-belovèd man."
And then she did something it would have been better to leave undone.

- Krimhild:*
899 She said: "My man is courageous, and more than strong enough. For when he killed the dragon, high on the mountain side, he bathed himself in its blood and made his skin so tough that forever after no weapon could hurt him, all blades and points turn aside.
- 900 "But even so I worry, whenever he's off to war, with heroic warriors hurling spears from all directions, that I could lose my well-belovèd man. O Lord, how often I'm terrified that Sifried will not return from war.
- 901 "Knowing your loyal heart, my dearest friend, sure you'll never betray me, but keep my secrets safe, you're the only one I'll tell just how my man can be hurt. I speak only to you, and only in absolute confidence.
- 902 "When Sifried struck the dragon and its boiling blood came splashing out, my bold heroic man bathed in that flood, but a single shiny lime leaf drifted down on his back. That spot is where he'd be hurt, the only place the blood didn't touch."
- 903 Then Hagen of Troneg spoke: "Mark a little cross on his clothes, something to guide me. That way I'll stay as close as I can, and protect him, knowing where it's always best to be." She meant Sifried well, but what she bought was his death.
- 904 Krimhild said: "I'll secretly sew a silken mark on the back of his clothes. And then, heroic Hagen, your hand can always be ready, in battle, to help protect my man in the midst of his enemies, whenever the fiercest fighting starts."
- 905 "And that's what I'll do," said Hagen, "my well-belovèd lady." This was precisely the moment, hoping to keep him safe, when Krimhild guaranteed her husband's fatal betrayal. Hagen made his farewells and left her. His heart was light and gay.



Hagen hurled away
 Sifried's bow and sword, when Sifried's back was turned.
 Quickly, Hagen snatched his own spear, looked at the shirt,
 and immediately saw the mark Krimhild had carefully sewn in place.

981 And while Sifried was drinking deep, bending over
 the water, Hagen's spear ran him through, aimed
 at the cross. Heart's blood spurted, Hagen's clothes were stained.
 No hero ever committed a more atrocious, evil crime.

982 Hagen's spear had reached the heart, and there it stayed.
 Hagen had never run so fast as he did that day,
 more terrified than ever before in all his life.
 When noble Sifried felt the fatal thrust of that fearsome knife,

983 he leaped back from the brook, mad with savage rage.
 He could see the sharp-edged blade protruding through his heart,
 and tried to find his bow or his sword, neither placed,
 now, where he'd left them, thanks to Hagen, who'd already discarded

984 them both. Without a sword, badly wounded Sifried
 had nothing more than his shield. He picked it up from the ground
 and ran after the fleeing traitor. Hagen found,
 King Gunter's man, that no matter how fearfully fast he fled, no speed

985 was enough. Sifried struck fiercely enough to kill,
 smashing at Hagen with his shield so hard that its jewels spilled
 on the grass, and the shield shattered to bits. He was eager to finish
 the job, the bleeding, noble guest, complete his final revenge.

986 He'd managed to strike Hagen with tremendous force. The blow
 echoed across the forest. If he'd had his sword, Hagen
 would have been as good as dead. A man as bold
 as Sifried had to be overwhelmed with rage—and he was.

987 But the color had bled from his face. He could not stand much longer.
 All the strength in his body had ebbed away. Strong
 signs of death, its pallor, its weakness, began to appear.
 He would soon be mourned by many beautiful women everywhere.

988 Then Krimhild's husband fell among the flowers. The Burgundy
 men saw blood pouring out of his wound. He burst
 (no one had ever had more reason) into bitter curses
 against the men who'd brought him death by their false-mouthed treachery.

989 These were Sifried's words: "Ah, disgusting cowards,
 what did I ever do to deserve so awful a death?
 I was always loyal, I gave you success and wealth.
 My dying wish for you and your kinsmen is an end equally foul.

990 "You've shamed the people born to the Rhine, from this day forth.
 They're stained by what you've done. I gave you affection, concern.
 You've paid me back with an angry death. A fine return
 for my love! This dark disgrace will drive you out of the knightly world."

991 Knights came running to murdered Sifried, to where he lay
 on the ground. For many of them this was a miserable day.
 His death would be mourned by those who'd truly deserved his trust.
 Noble Sifried had earned their faith, served as a good knight must.

992 Gunter, Burgundy's king, mourned the hero's death.
 Sifried said: "Don't bother with that, save your breath.
 It makes no sense to be crying for something you so much desired.
 You've earned your share of shame, Gunter, now hold your peace, be quiet."

993 Then savage Hagen spoke: "Why are you others complaining?
 Now we're finished with sorrow, we're done with grief. Just how
 many men will dare oppose us, try to stop us, now?
 Me, I'm glad his Mightiness will not be able to afflict us again."