

**Rahul Gupta****Gleipnir: To Bind The Wolf<sup>1</sup>**

...then the Æsir began to fear they might never be able to get The Wolf bound. Then All-Father sent down to Swartelphame to some dwarves and had made the fetter that is called Gleipnir. It was made of six ingredients: of the noise of the cat's footfall and of the beard of a woman and of the roots of rocky mountains and of the sinews of a bear and of the breath of a fish and of a fowl's spittle. The fetter was soft and smooth as a silken ribbon. Then the Æsir showed Fenrir the silky band and bade him tear it, saying that it was rather tougher than might seem likely. The Wolf answered: 'It seems to me that I shall get no glory from ripping asunder such a flimsy ribbon, but if it be fashioned with craftiness and wiles, then, though it seem little, that band is never coming near my feet.' Then the Æsir said that he would soon tear asunder such a slight silky lace, he who had before broken great fetters of iron. The Wolf said: 'I am not eager that this binding should be laid upon me. Yet rather than that you should question my courage, let some one of you place his hand in my mouth as a pledge that this is done in good faith.' Týr reached out his right hand and put it in The Wolf's mouth. And when The Wolf kicked, then the band hardened; and the harder he struggled, the tighter the band. Then all laughed save Týr. He'd lost his hand. Thus lies The Wolf till The Doom of the Gods...

—Snorri, *Gylfaginning*, 34

We know the Fenris Wolf is loose.

—Kipling

A leash locked by black-elves.  
 They laced it, penned Fenrir  
 in winding wires, slender  
 webbing milky-silken.  
 Gauze gossamer-tissued;  
 gods and monster ponder:  
 was soft-seeming weftage  
 secretly no weakness?

—*foot-fall of a kitten*  
*founding roots of mountains*—

Twirls were twined and stranded  
 of twisted cords, listed  
 as subtly-sired mettles  
 sourced like smelted ore-veins;  
 wisps removed, inwoven,  
 from world-kingdom thinghood:  
 unlikely lode-makings  
 in linked chains were tintured.

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<sup>1</sup>The versification is Old Norse Skaldic *dróttkvætt*.

*— the hive-hunter's neroures  
hairs sheared from the beardless —*

What fish breathe. From feathered  
finches their beak-gleekings;  
bears' bent to be fearful  
(Bruin's now no coward);  
the roots whence rocks sprouted;  
rumble of cat's tumbling;  
barbered beards from maidens,  
bristly wives, and sisters.

*— the foam of fowls' droolings  
fenny-scaled's inhalings —*

They forge, finely-spinning  
this far-gathered harvest,  
stilling steamy cullings  
to stuff girt with virtues:  
suchlike simples temper  
seething alloy-wreathing;  
meld in strange amalgam  
on the murk-elves' furnace.

*— foot-fall of a kitten  
founding roots of mountains —*

Like dust of dream thistle-  
down as plaited matter,  
spliced in skeins of spindrift  
whose spume waxes flaxen;  
pith of pallid æther's  
puffball iron-toughened;  
as motes tugged by magnets  
muster snaky clusters;

*— the hive-hunter's neroures  
hairs sheared from the beardless —*

from dew-vapour droplets  
dawning forges hoarfrost;  
fossil amber forms as  
fir-trees spectral nectar;  
molten magma cooling  
to make schist and crystal:  
thus whimsied whiffs blooming  
to whip-lashing tripwires.

*— the foam of fowls' droolings  
finny-scaled's inhalings —*

Husks of hazes fusing  
hatch for Garm an armoured,  
glossy slipknot: Gleipnir —  
a glamour elves hammered?  
— Spun spellbinding, runic  
spider-staves; their slaving  
more on mental bondage  
than on metal-cast fetters?

*— foot-fall of a kitten  
founding roots of mountains —*

Could gods game for riddles  
be beguiled so slyly?  
Tether-teased-from-nothings'  
trammel none can damage:  
if noughts cipher network,  
the nexus so textured's  
webbing warped of absence,  
wefted sheer of zero.

*— the hive-hunter's neroures  
hairs sheared from the beardless —*

The worse the warg struggles,  
the witch-thongs get stronger —  
till Doom dusks, then Time's up;  
dwarven artists' bartered  
cantrip cost them plenty  
and crammed that maw: lawless  
Troth's token of oathplight;  
Týr's shamed, noble, maiming.

*— toes of tabby drubbing  
taproots mountains shoot from  
bushy beards from ladies  
a bill's dribble-spillage  
from gills, bubble-gulpings  
the grizzly's fear-wisdom  
an unsoothfast swordhand's  
slaughtered, mainsworn, mortmain. —*