

The Tree-Splitters

The Song of Dietrich (Der Dietrichleid)

(Ed. Note: Read across the "split" on each line)

Hark! And hear me, As I tell a tale When warriors walked And dangerous, daring Heroes never haltering For glory and greatness	a humble poet, of times gone by this wonder-land deeds were done 'gainst horrendous evil. those good men lived!
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From the Old World Folk seeking freedom Here they harkened To break the bonds of old	those warriors wandered from famine and despot hoping for new homes for bright futures.
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Of these was Dietrich The son of Sigmund Bavaria born The Theoden's thane	The doer of deeds slayer of men and branded by strife of thunder and might
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So honored was the hero That he was given The proud hand Wed on Christmas Morn But soon sorrow fell the hero's great heart Wilda; Christ-like companion	heralded by all a great, noble prize of the princess of the realm the couple was in bliss sadness sank into horror gripped his soul cut short by child-birth
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Rumors rained down By conniving craven men They sounded a sinister Turning the King's ear With their vile	rancid tales spread crawlers in shadows sermon of hate once kind and noble and vicious ear-venom
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This King, was corrupted Deeming his daughter's His hallman harried His wife Wilda The rifle-man struck; The stone-floor	by the consol of liars death the doing of Dietrich the hero within the Hall still warm in her grave spilling their blood was flooded with it!
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Forced to flee then
The Son of Sigmund
To wild Wisconsin
Living in lonely exile
Cold and callous
Except his son

from his Father-land
sought solitude afield
the warrior came
lost and abandoned by his liege
caring for nothing
Sigismund, Wilda-born

In this frozen forest
Living amongst tall
Father and son
Against wild winter

they flourished together
trees and snow
fighting for survival
winds and the cold

But these trying times
Seeing his son
He took up a trade
Living alongside
Germans, Irish, Poles

troubled Dietrich's soul
sorrowful and hungry
becoming a toppler-of-trees
the Lumberjacks
a great and mighty band!

The Time-River rolled
They prowled the bird-perches
Toppling the timber.
Logs were rolled
To Eau Claire they came

nine rapids were crossed
From Portage to Ashland
Tall trees fell by their axe!
rivers filled with wood
to be cut and sawed

Dietrich's glory grew
He boldly braved
Could cut more timber
Roll more lumber
And fight far better

with each good year
the bawdy wood
in colder climes
down long rivers
than folk half his age.

Then, in a cold November
Second son of Skule
A young man
His Father forced him
Hoping to make him manly

came Karl Thorson
Owner of S and T Lumber
yellow and aimless
to the forest
Karl was made Forman

But Karl was witless
Skule in his wisdom
One who would teach Karl
Hearing from a herald
He begged the Bavarian
Dietrich made his mind
Becoming teacher for

no woodsman was he
sought a protector
in the wood ways.
of heroic Dietrich
to teach his boy
the morning next
the talentless foreman.

Snow fell that season
And Dietrich took his task
Of the lush forest
Differing saw blades
Important knowledge

Karl sought his fortune
to teach Skule-son
and the logging camp
the men's favorite songs
for any noble foreman

Dietrich was beloved
But Karl was thought
No matter the medals
Nor the parties given
He was a foreman
A petite man

by his brave band
cold and aloof
the men received
with poets and singers
forsaken of respect
a pen pusher

So distraught was he
To win the respect
He would scout out
For the white pine
With no aid
Returning to the camp

Karl dreamed a plan
of the regal lumberjacks
the snowy forest
and wealth he sought
he would advance on
a commander of men

Dietrich called for
He would come
But the student
Would not heed
Ahead he would go

a wiser course
to watch over Karl
stubborn and willful
the heroes word
despite great dangers.

The foreman departed
On a dreary day
Grey skies sunk
And a hollow wind
When Skuleson left

forgoing assistance
in December's reign
the shantymen's hearts
whipped their souls
seeking salvation or death

The men mourned
None thought to see
Their plight was tragic.
No logs were rolled
Being left leaderless

that soul-bleak morn
their lord again
No trees were toppled
raging was their grief
they looked to Dietrich.

Dietrich, the saw-man
Would not forsake
"Be it better for
fulfilling his duty,
with a cowards heart,"

the son of Sigmund
his fitful charge
a man to be buried
than die old in bed
he called out

“We are woodsmen
Our lives are short
I shall seek my student
And bring him to camp
Or my dead Father

wearers of flannel
but we live large
in the snowy wood
cold but alive
I shall meet tonight!”

His words hot in ear
They sprang to work
While daring Dietrich
And followed his foreman

heartened were the lumbermen
to the woods they returned
drew up his ax
into the forest, dark

Dietrich pursued
The foreman’s trail
Hunger gripped tight
Karl, witless and young

his prey for days
told the man’s tale
his heart and gnawed
was no wooded man

But O! Discordia
For wretched weird
Of the great loves
Men mean little
With a bone-chill howl
Soon widows weeping
A son’s scream
And the bellowing
Would carry no more

Dietrich stalked not alone
weaves its webs uncaring
and losses of man.
when measured by it.
a hero’s fate was sealed
would echo the wood
would shatter the trees
of a beastly villain
through the cold world!

They had stalked him
Hunger haunted them
The forest was barren
Until, nearly starving
Sick and cold now
So they had attacked
The wolf-chief howled

silently for hours
hardening their resolve
it had boar them no prey
Skule-son had been seen.
Karl could give no fight.
unaware of their folly
it was heard for miles

With each winter day
He was a creature
The wood-rhythm
He felt hearty and
The best since boyhood
When the wolf wailed
A mere quarter mile

Dietrich had drawn closer
created for nature
ruled his soul
hale hunting his prey
Bavaria and Wilda.
He walked behind
making haste towards destiny

Now, much has been made
His bold battles
How he split the skulls
And killed the Wendigo!

of mighty Sigismund
his brave deeds
of skulking fiends
No weak feat was that!

He was Dietrich's boydropped from his father
As the fresh acorn falls from the great oak
Valor swam through that family's veins!

Dietrich leapt forth the loupes howled
His steel axe swung scattering their blood
The pines heard their painful screams
As the great hero halted their feast
But, bold and strong the Bavarian was mortal
The wolf-chief saw his loyal clan dying
Anger beat his brow a scream broke out
He flung himself at his foe-man
Teeth bit down tearing at flesh
The hero howled in horrid fear

Dietrich bellowed bucking his body
Life-water leaked his leg screamed
Harnessing his strength he hurled his attacker
From his noble self into the snowy trees
His axe now ready battle-rage upon him
The Lumberman waited for the wolf's attack

The wolf-king cried courageous to the end
Badly bloodied by his broken flight
He stood again staring at the battler
A snarl sounded teeth unsheathed
Throwing himself then towards Dietrich's throat.

The hero stood tall towering over all
His axe raised ready to strike
The wolf leapt the weapon fell
Breaking through bone brain and sinew
The virgin snow was sprayed red with blood
The King's body lay crumpled and cold
An axe embedded in its august head.
Dietrich screamed into the snowy sky
The wind carried his cry of victory.

Three days later the duo returned
Dietrich still bloody bandaged at the leg
Karl the foreman frozen in shock
They were made well medicine was given
Time was taken and tales were told

Soon all had heard
Of Dietrich's deeds
Word was sent out
To the lumber camp
And to find truth

the heroic story
that December morn
and Skule returned
to look over his boy
in the tales he heard.

He found his son
The horrible ordeal
His eyes echoed

sorrowful and weak
haunted Karl's mind
soul shattering loss

"Daring Dietrich
is a great hero
He fought to save me
Which sought me

that doer of deeds
glorious and proud
from fiendish villains
to slay and eat."

"I am a coward
I deserve no tribute
While Dietrich fought
Until I slipped
He found me there
Both of us bleeding
Give all credit

craven are my ways
triumph is not mine
I fled on foot
striking my head.
following the fight
but only my head bowed.
to that courageous hero."

"Take my title
Give it to a man
Allow me to lie here
A forsaken son

I am a terrible foreman
more deserving than I
lost in my thoughts
sorrowful and ashamed"

But Skule beamed
"Many a man
who faced by this fate
In great shame
Rightfully given

a smile broke his face
immoral and weak
would fear and quake.
they would steal the fame
to a righteous man"

"You're a different type
Admitting your faults
You are my son
You should be honored
For your bravery
Is rare these days

Taking, not, false glory
failing to boast
sacred to me.
hailed by others
not bold, but quiet
as rough as they are."

"Soon we shall go
The harsher ways
are not to be yours.
You are more sensitive

to safety and city.
of this wooded clime
Though not yellow
a man of culture."

Karl simply nodded
Upon his battered face.
To leave his son
A boy no more

a small smile crept
The Father turned
lying upon the bed;
now an aged man.

Next Skule went
Bandaged in bed,
Dietrich's stalwart son
Stood silent vigil
His ill Father

to the weakened warrior
battered but unbroken
Sigismund the bold
valorously protecting
the former tutor.

The silence was heavy
Skule, the gold-giver
"Dietrich the Great!
My younger son,
Was heroically saved

and hard to bear
grew grave and forma
Doer of deeds!
so silent and fair
his humble life spared"

"You should be lauded
Risking you life
those ferocious fiends.
for your wounds weld

for your labor of love
and rising to battle
Foul I feel now,
and you're weakened by struggle.

"But my princely son
Told the truth
Wisdom he's gained
He is a man now
Such bitty balms

proud and noble
a towering feat!
and glory he gave.
mighty and moral.
for your bitter hurts!"

But Sigmundson spoke
"Such is the ways
A student towers
I long for no less
I fulfilled my duty
I ask for nothing

strong and sincere
of weird and life
while a tutor tumbles
for I loved my task
dangerous though it was
no noble rewards."

At this Skule laughed
"I thought my thane
How should I sleep
Knowing I slighted
I could not!
No. You shall get
You stood fast
A mighty foreman

loud and long
a more thankful man
slumbering in bed
my noble wood-knight?
Cold would be my heart.
many gifts and glories
not fleeing in fright.
I will make you."

At this Dietrich
He was proud
The axe-man smiled then
“Before God almighty
I shall fight for you
to bow to your will.

dropped his head
purged of past sins
and thanked his lord
I give you my word
and force the forest
The woods are yours”

“I already know
The Pine King

no less will be given”
cried out to Dietrich.

The golden sun
Warming the harvester’s
Who came to witness
The crowning of Dietrich
By his liege lord

shone down on all
hearts and souls
a wondrous occasion.
that courageous man
the lumber owner

That December day
A royal ring
It gave off a glimmer
Whelan would weep
Skule gave freely

Dietrich accepted
wrought of gold
so great was it made
at the work of it.
such fantastic treasures.

Then laying his axe,
Before Thorson
Dietrich shook hands.
They loved their foreman
To black-hot hell
Men were more daring

the lauded Wolf’s Bane,
and thanking the man
The Shantymen cheered
would follow him now
begging for more!
in days of old!

The Pine Prince turned
"Cold and callous
Following my flight,
I dared not dream
Of living a life

and proudly proclaimed
my crippled heart beat
from my Fatherland
of dashing companions
I loved and adored."

"Here I stand
Back unbent
But what greatness
is yours as well
Boldly you backed me

stalwart and strong
or broken by years
I've gathered here
my weathered woodsmen
a band who's loyal."

"I can not repay
Though I can thank you
With Fiddlers and Singers
Roasted ham
Large steins straining

a price so high.
by throwing a feast
songs of joy
rasher and bread
with strong beer.

The lumbermen moved to the meal hall then
Eating their fill fountains of beer
Celebrating the season and singing praises
Of daring Dietrich that doer of deed.

Then Emery Denoyer drew himself up
that blind balladeer with baritone voice
One armed minstrel maker of song.
He started to sing every soul listened.

*All You Jolly Young Fellows Come Listen to my Song
Its All About the Pinery Boys, and How they Got Along
They're the jolliest lot of fellows so merry and fine
They will spend the pleasant winter months in cutting down the pine*

*Some would leave their friends and homes, and others they love dear
And into the lonesome pinewoods their paths they do steer
Into the lonesome pine woods, all winter they remain
A'waiting for the springtime to return again*

*Springtime comes, oh glad will be the day
Some return to home and friends, while others go astray.
They sawyers and the choppers, they lay their timber low
The swampers and the teamsters they haul it to and fro.*

*Next come the loaders, before the break of day
Load up your sleighs, five thousand feet to the river, haste away.
Noon time rolls around, our foreman loudly screams,
"Lay down your tools, me boys, and we'll haste to pork and beans."*

*We arrive at the shanty, the splashing then beings
The banging og the water pails, the rattling of the tins.
In the middle of the splashing, our cooks for dinner does cry/
We all arise and go, for we hate to lose our pie*

*Dinner being over, we into our shanty go
We all fill up our pipes and smoke, 'til everything turns blue
"Its time for the wood, me boys", our foreman he does say
We all gather up our hats and caps, to the woods we haste away*

*We all go out with a welcome hear and a well-contented mind
For the winter wind blows cold among the waving pines.
The ringing of the saws and axes until the sun goes down.
"Lay down your tools, me boys, for the shanties we are bound"*

*We arrive at the shanties with cold and wet feet,
Take off our over boots and packs, and supper we must eat.
Supper being ready, we all arise and go.
For it ain't the style of a lumberjack to lose his has, you know.*

*At three o'clock in the morning, our bold cook loudly shouts,
"Roll out, roll out, you teamsters, its time that you are out"
The teamsters they get up in a fright and manful wail:
"Where is my boots? Oh where's my pack? My rubbers have gone astray"
The other men then get up, their packs they cannot find
And they lay it to the teamsters, and they cruse them 'til they're blind.*

*Springtime comes, Oh, glad will be its day!
Lay down your tools, me boys, and we'll haste to break away.
The floating ice is over, and business now destroyed.
And all the able-bodied men are wanted on the Pilican drive*

*With jam-pikes and peavys those able men do go
Up all those wild and dreary streams to risk their lives, you know
On cold and frosty mornings they shiver in the cold,
So much ice upon the jack-pikes, they scarcely them can hold.*

*Now whenever you hear those verses, believe them to be true
for if you doubt one word of them, just ask Dietrich's crew.
It was in Skule Thoreson's shanties where they were sung with glee
And the ending of my song is signed with C.D.F. and G.¹*

The saw-men sang	their songs with glee
They drank draughts	of dream-water, gold
Pounded pine tables.	Their party was merry!
They loved their lives	their liege and logging.

As night neared its end	the noblemen rose
Raising their glasses	glowing in fire-light
The smell of smoke	the sounds of joy
This band of brothers	born again as one

“Hail, heroic Dietrich.	Hand picked leader
Wielder of Wolf's Bane	warrior and prince
We proud, prideful men	pledge ourselves
To follow you forth	from forest and wood
We are your thanes.	That is our thanks.”

With such words	the wheel weaves
The fabric of fate.	Futures are formed
On the spinning spokes,	which spool time.

No King can quiet
No hero may halt
Gods are meager

that cold grinding
the heinous spin
when matched against it.

Death and doom
Mortal men know not
By simply speaking
Weird weaves about us

drip from such words
what mourning they cause
or swatting a fly.
We wander blindly.

By Daniel D. McCollum

¹ Peters, Harry B. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin* [Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin].