

Excerpt from The Prose Edda; The Death of Balder:

But of Hermod it is to be told that he rode nine nights through deep and dark valleys, and did not see light until he came to the Gjallar-river and rode on the Gjallar-bridge, which is thatched with shining gold. Modgud is the name of the may who guards the bridge. She asked him for his name, and of what kin he was, saying that the day before there rode five fylkes (kingdoms, bands) of dead men over the bridge; but she added, it does not shake less under you alone, and you do not have the hue of dead men. Why do you ride the way to Hel? He answered: I am to ride to Hel to find Balder. Have you seen him pass this way? She answered that Balder had ridden over the Gjallar-bridge; adding: But downward and northward lies the way to Hel. Then Hermod rode on till he came to Hel's gate. He alighted from his horse, drew the girths tighter, remounted him, clapped the spurs into him, and the horse leaped over the gate with so much force that he never touched it. Thereupon Hermod proceeded to the hall and alighted from his steed. He went in, and saw there sitting on the foremost seat his brother Balder. He tarried there over night. In the morning he asked Hel whether Balder might ride home with him, and told how great weeping there was among the asas. But Hel replied that it should now be tried whether Balder was so much beloved as was said. If all things, said she, both quick and dead, will weep for him, then he shall go back to the asas, but if anything refuses to shed tears, then he shall remain with Hel.