

A Communicator of the "Drop In" Type in Iceland: The Case of Runolfur Runolfsson¹

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INTRODUCTION

In previous articles one of us has drawn attention to the importance for the evidence of survival after death of mediumistic communications from communicators unknown, at the time of the sitting, to the medium and sitters present (Stevenson, 1965, 1970, 1973). The older literature of mediumship contains numerous individual examples of cases of this type (Gibbes, 1937; Hill, 1917; Moses, 1874, 1875, 1879; Tyrrell, 1939; Zorab, 1940). Their force has perhaps been missed because they have mostly been published in isolated case reports. Gault (1971) published a large block of such cases occurring in a private mediumistic circle in England.

We refer to the communicators of such cases as "drop in" communicators. The importance of these cases derives from the fact that their interpretation as due to telepathy between the medium and living persons (or to clairvoyance) must include understanding of the reason why one particular deceased person rather than another is selected for representation in dramatized form as the communicator of a message that the medium has built out of ingredients derived by extrasensory perception from living persons. Furthermore, when a "drop in" communicator seems to show purposiveness in what he communicates, his motivation to give a message to the sitters often seems greater than the medium's motivation to provide a message from that particular person. In other words, the hypothesis of telepathy among living persons and/or clairvoyance does not alone explain adequately the representation, in some of these cases at least, of the conative factors on the part of the communicator which seem to be in play. A hypothesis considering all the facts must somehow account not only for the cognitive details—that is, the correct information shown in the communication—but also for the accurate personation by the medium of the deceased person represented as communicating. (The same difficulties confront attempts at explaining all cases of the reincarnation type as due

¹ A brief report on this case was presented at the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the Parapsychological Association, Edinburgh, Scotland, September 2-5, 1972.

² We extend our thanks to Mrs. Elinborg Larusdottir of Reykjavik for her courtesy in answering our questions about this case and in facilitating our further inquiries about it.

³ Icelandic words, including most proper names, have many accented vowels; for reasons of economy in typesetting, we have omitted all such accents in this paper.

entirely to clairvoyance or telepathy among the living.) We are not categorically asserting that telepathy among the living or clairvoyance could not best interpret some instances of “drop in” communicators and **also** some reincarnation cases. But we do say that many advocates of these hypotheses (sometimes conveniently called together the “super-ESP hypothesis”) seem to consider only the cognitive aspects of the cases to which they apply the theory without having fully thought out the other aspects, such as the conative features, in the total representation of the communicator. We must acknowledge, however, that in many communications of the “drop in” type, the communicator says very little about himself. Often he does not say why he has chosen to communicate at a particular **séance** or does not even provide sufficient information for conjectures about his motives.

The term that has become popular for these communicators derives from the fact that many of them seem to “drop in” and, after registering, so to speak, they just as quickly “drop out,” so that one never hears from them again. The cases of Abraham Florentine (Moses, 1874, 1875, 1879; Stevenson, 1965), Robert Passanah (Stevenson, 1970), and Robert Marie (Stevenson, 1973) all illustrate this feature of transient manifestation. The communicator Abraham Florentine never gave any reason for appearing in England when he had died in Brooklyn, New York. The communicator Robert Passanah also gave no reason for his appearance, although all the available information about the case permitted the speculation that he might have come to reassure his grieving mother about his survival at a time when the removal of his tombstone in the cemetery had renewed her sorrow. Robert Marie was said to have been brought to the **séances** at which he manifested expressly to provide evidence of survival after death because he was completely unknown to the medium and the single sitter and hence, so it was supposed, his verified communications could not be explained away as due to telepathy-at least between the medium and sitter. Of these three communicators, Robert Passanah appeared at one **séance** only, Abraham Florentine at two only, and Robert Marie at about four only. Afterwards all disappeared without trace. This feature of “drop in” communicators does not by itself invalidate their claim to be deceased persons actually giving messages through mediums. It may well be that, supposing them to be actual deceased persons, they only wish to establish their identity, perhaps to reassure their surviving relatives, and when they have accomplished this, they have no further motive for appearances at later **séances**. In an analysis of cases from *Phantasms of the Living* suggestive of survival, Gibson found that the “agent, dying or dead, appears to be the principal and compelling factor in the phenomena observed, **while the percipient usually takes a secondary role**” (Gibson, 1944, p. 105). Perhaps motive to

communicate is not only a feature of the putative deceased agent's situation, but an actual *requirement* for a successful communication. And once the motivation has been appeased, so to speak, by a successful communication, the agent may lack the "power" to provide additional communications about himself or some other topic, no matter how eager sitters may be to hear more from him.

Be that as it may, one cannot avoid a feeling of disappointment, bordering on vexation, that so many "drop in" communicators vanish forever as soon as they have identified themselves. One would like to become better acquainted with them and to understand more fully the motives of their communications and the further development of their thoughts and other aspects of their personalities. We present here a case of a "drop in" communicator who did not "talk and run," but instead continued to communicate frequently through the medium and eventually became his regular control. This case has the additional important feature that the written information which finally enabled verification of the communicator's identity did not exist in any one source, but rather in two. But even these two written sources did not contain all the verified details of the communication. We do not think that all of these details were known to any single living person, although we cannot be quite positive of this last point.

Our information on the case derives from three sources? First, we have used written reports of the case published in the Icelandic language. Secondly, we have obtained additional information about the medium from other published reports or documents. And finally, we (principally E.H.) have personally made additional inquiries in Iceland about various details of the case.

HAFSTEINN BJORNSSON, THE MEDIUM IN THE CASE

The medium in the case we shall report, Hafsteinn Bjornsson, ⁴ was born in Skagafjörður, in northern Iceland, on October 30, 1914. His paranormal powers manifested in early childhood and have, according to his own account (Bjornsson, 1972), remained strong ever since. One of our informants, Ingibjörg Danivaldottir, knew him in 1934 and told E.H. that Hafsteinn was then having psychical experiences and frequently "seeing" deceased persons.

In about 1933-35 Hafsteinn spent approximately two years in the area of Keflavík, southwest of Reykjavík. In about 1936 he moved to a place about 40 miles east of Reykjavík and in the following year (1937)

⁴ We think readers will find it helpful if we mention now that in Iceland everyone uses a given name to which he (usually) attaches his father's name as a further identification. Men usually add the suffix "son" to the father's name and women the suffix "dottir." Women usually retain their own names after marriage. Persons in Iceland are identified (e.g., in the telephone book) primarily by their first names. Following this custom, we shall hereafter refer to the medium as "Hafsteinn."

into Reykjavik itself. Also in that year he began to give regular sittings as a medium, and has continued to do so ever since.

Hafsteinn is a full-time employee of a radio station in Reykjavik. He is not a professional medium in the sense of making his living primarily from mediumship, but he does accept fees from sitters. Hafsteinn is sometimes able to describe discarnate entities which he claims to see around persons in his presence when he is apparently in a waking state. We have reported results of an experiment (Haraldsson and Stevenson, 1974) in which Hafsteinn participated in this manner; the results were significantly positive.

Hafsteinn is also a trance medium who has regular controls, and also communicators other than the controls who sometimes seem to speak directly through his vocal apparatus. He has a remarkable gift for getting through proper names—a gift which, as is well known, very few mediums possess. His accomplishments in this regard remind us of the little-known English medium, A. Wilkinson, who was, incidentally, the medium for several excellent examples of ‘drop in’ communicators (Hill, 1917). Indeed, some greater than average ability to communicate proper names is almost essential for “drop in” communications, which otherwise would rarely contain sufficient details to make verification possible.

Hafsteinn also seems to have the ability, manifested on very rare occasions, of enabling a communicator to speak in a language unknown to the medium. According to one published report (Larusdottir, 1970), Professor Svend Fredriksen of Denmark, visiting in Iceland, attended a *séance* with Hafsteinn and conversed for a short time in the Eskimo language with a communicator purporting to be an Eskimo from Greenland. Professor Fredriksen had spent much time in Greenland and knew the Eskimo language well. (Despite the geographical proximity of Iceland and Greenland and their common association for centuries with Denmark, almost no one in Iceland can speak the Eskimo language and the medium certainly never learned it.) The Eskimo communicator was a person the Danish professor had known when he lived in Greenland. E.H. interviewed two sitters who had attended this sitting and a third person in whose home Professor Fredriksen was staying in Reykjavik. All said that Professor Fredriksen had told them that he had conversed in the Eskimo language with the communicator. Unfortunately, no concurrent notes or tape recordings were made of this exchange in the Eskimo language and we are ‘not in a position to claim more for it than its value as an illustration of the variety of powers attributed to Hafsteinn.

Hafsteinn’s mediumship has evoked much interest in his own country and particularly from the members of the Iceland Society for Psychical Research. Upon returning to Iceland after several years abroad, one of us (E.H.) became acquainted with him and also with a

number of persons who had known him over many years. These inquiries confirmed in our minds the impression given in the reports published in Iceland that Hafsteinn is a most remarkable medium.

Unfortunately, the earlier records of **séances** with Hafsteinn leave something to be desired in that the sitters rarely made verbatim transcripts or tape recordings. Some sitters have made brief notes of the events of the **séances** and others have written out statements later. Only a few **séances** have been recorded on tape. However, the dates of each **séance** and the names and addresses of all sitters have been recorded. Elinborg Larusdottir (1946, 1965, 1970) has written several books in which she has included reports of Hafsteinn's sittings. In preparing her reports she interviewed sitters at the relevant **séances**, individually and together, and then included in the accounts only details about which all the persons interviewed agreed. Also she sometimes obtained and published written documents, including affidavits from sitters which state that her reports accorded with their memories.

CASE REPORT

We shall present first a summary derived from the translation by one of us (E.H.) of a report of the case published by Elinborg Larusdottir (1946).⁵

During the years 1937-38 a group of persons attended regular sittings with Hafsteinn at the home of Einar H. Kvaran in Reykjavik. At first they held the sittings weekly and later usually twice weekly. Sometime in the autumn of 1937 a communicator, who showed most unusual behavior, began to manifest through the medium in trance. When asked to identify himself he said, "My name is Jon Jonsson or Madur Mannsson"⁶ and added: "What the hell does it matter to you what my name is?"

Einar Kvaran asked the communicator what he wanted and to this he replied: "I am looking for my leg. I want to have my leg." Einar Kvaran then asked where his leg would be, and the communicator replied: "It is in the sea."

The communicator continued to manifest at subsequent sittings, always demanding his leg and always refusing to reveal his identity.

In the autumn of 1938 sittings with Hafsteinn were held at the home of Lilja Kristjansdottir. The same communicator appeared also at these sittings still demanding his leg and still refusing to say who

⁵We have made some minor and inconsequential corrections in dates based on our later inquiries in Iceland, including the recollections of Hafsteinn himself.

⁶These are stereotyped fictitious names. The communicator's use of them would be the equivalent of a communicator at an American **séance** saying: "Just call me Henry Jones or Mr. **Anyman**, if you prefer." They were part of the communicator's avoidance of revealing his real identity.

he was. These sittings were attended by some sitters not present at the earlier ones held during the preceding year. The persons participating in the sittings included Niels Carlsson and his wife, Gudrun Stefansdottir, of Hafnarfjordur. Soon after (January 1, 1939) Ludvik Gudmundsson joined the circle. He was a fish merchant who owned a fish processing factory in the village of Sandgerdi, about 36 miles from Reykjavik, but he and his wife lived in Reykjavik. They also owned a house in Sandgerdi.

When Ludvik Gudmundsson joined the sittings the strange communicator, who was still calling himself only Jon Jonsson or Madur Mannsson, expressed pleasure at meeting him. Ludvik Gudmundsson and Niels Carlsson, a sitter on previous occasions, were related and acquainted, but the medium had never met Ludvik Gudmundsson before and knew nothing about him or his family. Ludvik Gudmundsson could not make any sense of the communicator's pleasure in meeting him. When he asked the communicator who he was, as other sitters had done previously, the communicator continued the game of not revealing his identity. But he did finally say that Ludvik Gudmundsson knew about his leg and that it was now in his house at Sandgerdi. Even after saying this much, however, he continued stubbornly to conceal his identity.

During this period, the communicator showed behavior quite different from that habitual to the medium. For example, he often asked for snuff. Then he would go through the motions of taking snuff by lifting his hand to his (the medium's) nose and **sniffing**. He also asked for coffee and suggested that when the sitters had coffee after the *séance*, which was their custom, they should pour out a cup for him! Once a sitting with Hafsteinn was held at the home of a Mrs. Soffra. The enigmatic communicator manifested and Mrs. Soffra asked if he would like to have some snuff. He declined this offer and said that he did not want coffee either, but that he would take something else she had. When she asked what that was, the communicator said that she had something in a glass at the back of a cupboard in the kitchen. Mrs. Soffra then remembered that she had some rum in her kitchen that she occasionally used for cooking. She refused, however, to give the rum to the communicator, which refusal evoked grumbling from him. Once a sitter asked the communicator, with reference to his sensuous cravings, why he had not evolved further. To this he replied: "I do not want to be [more evolved]. It is fine to be as I am." ⁷

Finally at one sitting Ludvik Gudmundsson and Niels Carlsson gave the communicator an ultimatum. They demanded to know his identity and said that otherwise they would do nothing for him. This

⁷ Hafsteinn drinks coffee and smokes a little. But he does not take snuff. With regard to alcohol, he said that he "may take a glass of wine once or twice a year."

had the effect of annoying the communicator, who then did not appear for many sittings. When he finally returned (exact date of this sitting not recorded; see footnote 11 below), he seemed to come abruptly and the sitters had the impression that he literally forced himself into the medium by jostling aside another communicator. The communicator then said:

Well, it is best for me to tell you who I am. My name is Runolfur Runolfsson and I was 52 years old when I died. I lived with my wife at Kolga or Klappakot, near Sandgerdi. I was on a journey from **Keflavik**⁸ in the latter part of the day and I was drunk. I stopped at the house of Sveinbjorn Thordarson in Sandgerdi and accepted some refreshments there. When I wanted to go, the weather was so bad that they did not wish me to leave unless accompanied by someone else. I became angry and said I would not go at all if I could not go alone. My house was only about 15 minutes' walk away. So I left by myself, but I was wet and tired. I walked over the **kambinn**⁹ and reached the rock known as Flankastadaklettur which has almost disappeared now. There I sat down, took my bottle [of alcoholic spirits], and drank some more. Then I fell asleep. The tide came in and carried me away. This happened in October, 1879. I was not found until January, 1880. I was carried in by the tide, but then dogs and ravens came and tore me to pieces. The remnants [of my body] were found and buried in Utskalar ¹⁰ graveyard. But then the thigh bone was missing. It was carried out again to sea, but was later washed up again at Sandgerdi. There it was passed around and now it is in Ludvik's house (Larusdottir, 1946, pp. 203-204).

The communicator also mentioned another detail, namely, that he had been very tall, but we do not know if he mentioned this at the time he identified himself or at an earlier sitting. ¹¹

Upon hearing this communication, Ludvik Gudmundsson and Niels Carlsson asked where they could find proof of the accuracy of what the communicator had narrated. To this he replied: "In the church book of Utskalar Church,"

The sitters examined the church books of Utskalar and quickly located in them the record of a person with the name given by the

⁸ **Keflavik** is a small town approximately six miles from Sandgerdi. It lies on the northern side of the Sudurnes peninsula about 30 miles from Reykjavik. Sudurnes is the name of the area in which all the places (except Reykjavik) to be mentioned are located. It is southwest of Reykjavik.

⁹ The **kambinn** is the shelf of pebbles on the beach near the sea.

¹⁰ Utskalar is a farm near the tip of the Sudurnes peninsula on which Sandgerdi and Keflavik are located. It is approximately four miles from Sandgerdi and six from Keflavik.

¹¹ In an interview (in 1972) with E.H., one of the sitters who had been present, Niels Carlsson, said that the sitting at which the communicator finally identified himself occurred in the late winter or spring of 1939. Niels Carlsson also stated that no notes were made during the sittings, but immediately afterwards notes were made of statements the sitters wanted to verify. Unfortunately, these notes were not kept.

communicator. The presumed date of death given and the age of death given both proved to be correct. But the mystery of the leg remained.

Some time before these sittings, when Ludvik Gudmundsson had purchased the fish factory and his house at Sandgerdi, he had heard an account of a haunting of the latter. He had been told of two skulls that were kept in the house. A young man living there had thrown one of these skulls into a corner with a contemptuous remark about trash lying around. The next night the inhabitants of the house felt the "presences" of two men who seemed to go around looking at everyone who was sleeping, or trying to do so. "They" stopped particularly at the bedside of the boy who had thrown the skull and he became utterly terrified. The skulls had thereafter remained at the house until Ludvik Gudmundsson purchased it. He placed them in a glass box. He happened to mention the matter of the skulls to an inhabitant of the area who remarked that perhaps the house contained other bones that might be found if *one* searched for them. Ludvik Gudmundsson thought no more about this suggestion at the time, but when the communicator, Runolfur Runolfsson,¹² affirmed that his leg was at Ludvik's house in Sandgerdi he recalled the incident of the skulls. So he went to several of the elderly men of the village and asked them if they knew anything about a leg bone in the area. Some of them recalled vaguely that a thigh bone (femur) had been "going around," but they did not know what had happened to it. Then someone said that he thought the carpenter who had built the inner wall downstairs in the northern part of the house had placed a leg bone there between the inner and outer walls of the house. He had said, it appears, that it would not be in the way there!¹³

Ludvik Gudmundsson's house was large, however, and it was not a simple matter to decide in which wall, if any, the leg bone had been placed. Someone suggested the area between two windows. The wall there was opened up, but the leg bone was not found. Then a man called Helgi Thordarson, a mechanic employed at the fish factory who had lived for a time in one room of Ludvik's house, and who had also known of the carpenter putting a femur between the two walls, suggested that it might be in the room where he had lived.¹⁴ The

¹² "Runki" is the familiar name for Runolfur in Iceland and the one by which the communicator, once he had identified himself, quickly became known.

¹³ Some readers may find this an odd way of disposing of a human bone. It should be understood, however, that it would be considered disrespectful, if not sacrilegious, in Iceland simply to throw a bone away. At the same time, it would be infeasible to bury a bone in the consecrated ground of a cemetery without knowing the identity of its owner. We describe below the ceremony associated with the burial of the femur after it was found.

¹⁴ According to E.H.'s later inquiries, the carpenter himself, Asbjorn Palsson, was called into the search and indicated the place in the wall where he had put the femur during the remodeling of the house. See later sections of this paper for further details.

wall was therefore torn open in this room and a femur discovered. It was extremely long, thus according with one of the communicator's earlier statements to the effect that he had been very tall. (Runki's grandson, Jonas Bjarnason, later told us that his grandfather had been over six feet tall.) This bone, possibly Runki's, was thus found in 1940, that is, more than 60 years after Runki's death and about three years after the first communications that apparently came from him.

When Ludvik Gudmundsson found the bone he took it to his office for safekeeping and had a coffin built for it. He kept it for a year and then had a religious burial ceremony performed for it at Utskalar. The participants believed they were burying the last earthly remains of Runki, although they were merely assuming that the femur discovered in Ludvik's house had come from Runki's dismembered body found and buried about 60 years earlier. The burial ceremony followed the traditional procedure for such occasions in Iceland. The clergyman gave a sermon eulogizing Runki, the choir sang, and afterwards the participants enjoyed a reception at the clergyman's home. Several of the regular sitters at Hafsteinn's *séances* attended the burial ceremony and party afterwards. The medium, however, was not present.

Runki came and expressed gratitude at a *séance* held immediately after the burial ceremony for the femur. He declared that he had been present at the ceremony and reception and he described them in detail, even mentioning the names of the different cakes served at the clergyman's home. He expressed thanks particularly to Ludvik Gudmundsson and his wife for arranging the burial ceremony.

Elinborg Larusdottir examined the records of the parish of Utskalar and other relevant documents for the period mentioned in the communication from Runki. The records stated that in 1849 he had a home at Klopp in Hvalnes parish. In 1859 he lived at Flankastadakot (near the rock mentioned in the communication) with a woman by the name of Gudrun Bjarnadottir. They had a daughter named Gudrun Maria. This same information was also recorded in the national census for 1860. In that record Runki was counted as an unmarried laborer and was said to have been born in the parish of Melar. The church records at Melar recorded that he was born on December 25, 1828, at Melaleiti, in **Borgarfjordur**. He was the son of Runolfur Thorsteinsson, a farm laborer in Hafthorsstadir in Nordurardal, and Gudrun Magnusdottir, who worked as a domestic servant in Melaleiti. The church records also listed Gudrun Bjarnadottir as living (in 1860) and a housewife, but the document does not imply that she was legally married to Runki.

Later records showed that Runki was located at Klappakot (Kolga) and as having three children, two boys and a girl. In 1879 records showed him still living at Klappakot. As Gudrun Bjarnadottir's name

then no longer appeared in the church records, it is assumed she had died before that date. In the following year (1880) the name of Runolfur Runolfsson also disappeared from the church books of Utskalar. However, in Iceland clergymen keep official records and notes of unusual events, mainly religious functions and ceremonies of their parishes. And in the clergyman's record book of Utskalar parish the following note occurred:

On October 16, 1879, Runolfur Runolfsson, living in Klappakot, was missing on account of some accidental or unnatural occurrence on his way home from Keflavik during a storm with rain near his farm in the middle of the night. He is believed to have been carried along by the storm down to the beach south of the farm boundary at Flankastadir from where the sea carried him away, because his bones were found dismembered much later and his clothes were also washed up separated [i.e., apart from his bones].

The clergyman's records further stated that the bodily remains of Runolfur Runolfsson had been decently buried on January 8, 1880. He was recorded as being 52 years old at the time of death.¹⁵

The report published by Elinborg Larusdottir (1946) from which we have drawn the above account contained at the end the following affidavit from sitters present during the *séances* when Runki communicated:

The events happening in connection with Runolfur Runolfsson were so memorable that we believe that those of us who took part in these events remember them distinctly. Therefore we are glad to testify that the above report is accurate.

Dated: Reykjavik, April 23, 1946

Signed: Ludvik Gudmundsson Kristjana Arnadottir
 Jorunn Gudmundsson Niels Carlsson
 Lilja Kristjansdottir

Further Verifications

Early in 1969 a summary of this case appeared in a newspaper of Reykjavik, *Lesbok Morgunbladsins*. This led a correspondent, the Rev. Jon Thorarensen, to write to *Lesbok Morgunbladsins* drawing attention to another place where a written record existed concerning Runki's death. This occurred in a book, *Annals of Sudurnes*, written by the Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen,¹⁶ the clergyman of Utskalar at the

¹⁵ Since Runki was born (according to the church records at Melar) on December 25, 1828, he was actually not quite 51 years old when he died in October, 1879. The clergyman who wrote the note may have intended to say that Runki was in his 52nd year at the time his death was finally proven by the recovery of his bodily remains.

¹⁶ The Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen was also the author of the church records of the parish of Utskalar. These records consisted largely of official notes about activities in the parish, e.g., births, marriages, and deaths, whereas *Annals of Sudurnes* has more the quality of a personal record, almost a diary, of events in the area surveyed.

time of Runki's death, and edited by the Rev. Jon Thorarensen. (This book, however, had not been published until 1953, a point to which we shall return later.) We shall next quote E.H.'s translation of the communication of the Rev. Jon Thorarensen published on March 9, 1969, in *Lesbok Morgunbladsins*.

The Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen of Utskalar parish was born in 1808 and died in 1887. He was a devoted clergyman, diligent within and outside his church. He was one of the few men who combined literary work with practical affairs. His *Annals* contains detailed records for the year 1879. The writer deals much with the extreme severity of the weather. We read that there were many ships lost at Skagi in extraordinarily bad weather during the night of October 16, 1879. During the same night an accident occurred. A certain man from Klappakot, by the name of Runolfur, who had come from Keflavik late in the day during a big storm with rain, came to the farm at Landakot¹⁷ and left it at eleven o'clock. He had only a short distance to go in the dark to reach his own home. It is believed that he was swept along by the storm onto the beach where the sea carried him away. He had been rather drunk with brandy which he carried with him.

It seems from this report that Runolfur was not well known in this area. The Rev. Sigurdur Sivertsen no doubt knew the people of his area very well, and yet he only referred to "a certain man from Klappakot by the name of Runolfur." When this was written he had been a clergyman of the place (Utskalar) for 48 years.¹⁸ In the entries for the period after the New Year (1880) we can read the following passage in the *Annals of Sudumes*:

"At that time the bones of the late Runolfur were washed up on the beach near Flankastadir. His bones were all torn asunder and the flesh had been torn off the bones, but his clothes had been washed up also and some of them were not torn. His jacket was buttoned. [It is implied that the body and clothes were washed up separately.] People guessed that the sea had taken him when he had sat down exhausted or that he had suffered sudden death because of cold and exhaustion. It is believed that seals had eaten his flesh and torn asunder his body and that shrimp had consumed his flesh. All of this is believed to have occurred in a strange manner." This [last] conjecture does not concur with what Runolfur [the communicator] said at the mediumistic sessions, namely: "I was washed up, but then dogs and ravens came and tore me apart."

¹⁷ Landakot is (and was) the farm next to the farm of Sandgerdi. (When Runki was alive Sandgerdi was a farm, not the village it has since become.) In his communications Runki said that on the night of his death, during the storm, he had stopped at Sandgerdi on his way home; there is thus a discrepancy between his statement as to where he stopped on this journey and the notes of the Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen.

¹⁸ The other records we have already cited indicated that Runki had lived the first part of his life in another part of Iceland. The records show that he lived in several different places and may have been something of a "drifter," which could perhaps account for the fact that the Rev. Sigurdur Sivertsen knew him only slightly even though he (the Rev. Sigurdur Sivertsen) had been clergyman of the parish of Utskalar for nearly half a century at that time.

Later Inquiries by Ourselves

The foregoing reports seemed to us to justify further inquiries about details not included in them which the earlier investigators had perhaps overlooked or not mentioned in their reports. Accordingly, we drew up a list of various points that seemed to us to need more examination. Then on visits to Iceland in 1971-72, E.H. made inquiries covering nearly all these items. In September, 1972, I.S. spent several days in Iceland and worked with E.H. on the checking of various details. We went out to Sudurnes and looked over the terrain of Runki's death and the cemetery (at Utskalar) where his body and later the femur (that was thought to be his) were buried. Subsequently, E.H. had further interviews and continued checking on details that we felt still required investigation. In the end we interviewed a rather large number of persons who had information to give us about the medium (Hafsteinn), the sittings at which Runki had communicated, the verifications of the statements made at these sittings, or about Runki himself.

Persons Interviewed during the Investigation

We interviewed alone or together the following persons:

Hafsteinn Bjornsson, the medium

Elinborg Larusdottir, author of a published report on the case and of other reports about Hafsteinn's mediumship

Niels Carlsson, sitter at the **séances** at which Runki communicated

Ingibjorg Danivaldottir, a friend of Hafsteinn

Helgi Thordarson, former tenant of the house owned by Ludvik Gudmundsson in Sandgerdi where a femur was found in the wall

Gudmundur Jorundsson, a friend of Hafsteinn and frequent sitter at his se'ances

Eggert Briem, sitter at Hafsteinn's se'ances

Helgi Briem, sitter at Hafsteinn's **séances**

Rev. Jon Auduns, sitter at Hafsteinn's se'ances

Jon Eiriksson, who made inquiries for us about the femur located in Ludvik Gudmundsson's house

Jonas Bjarnason, Runki's grandson

Elisabet Helgadottir, Runki's granddaughter

Rev. Gudmundur Gudmundsson, clergyman of the parish of Utskalar

Rev. Jon Thorarensen, editor of *Annals of Sudurnes*

Sigurleifur Thorleifsson, guardian of a lighthouse in Sudurnes, who was present at the ceremony for the burial of the femur

Hulda Helgadottir, frequent sitter at Hafsteinn's **séances**

Otto **Michelsen**, sitter at Hafsteinn's se'ances

Zophonias Petursson, a friend of Hafsteinn . who had

accompanied him to the National Archives in November, 1939
(see below)

Ulfur Ragnarsson, M.D., frequent sitter at Hafsteinn's *séances*
Gisli Gudmundsson, resident of Sandgerdi

Einar Gestsson, resident of Sandgerdi

Johannes Sigurdsson, of Akranes, retired sea captain who had
lived in Sandgerdi around 1920

Johannes Jonsson, of Gerdum, shipowner in Sandgerdi during
the years 1917-37

During the years 1971-72 E.H. became well acquainted with Hafsteinn and learned from him that he had never been in Sandgerdi prior to the development of the case. Nor had he, so far as he knew, ever met any persons from Sandgerdi before the communicator had identified himself in the early months of 1939. This possibility, however, cannot be excluded, especially in view of the fact that Hafsteinn had spent approximately two years (roughly 1933-35) in the area of Keflavik, which is about five and a half miles from Sandgerdi.

In their first meetings E.H. questioned Hafsteinn about whether he had ever been in the National Archives or National Library (in Reykjavik) where relevant written records bearing on this case are kept. At this time Hafsteinn said that he had not been in the National Archives, although we later learned that he had, a topic to which we shall return later. But apart from this matter, we thought it important to examine these written records to learn all the details that they contained, some of which might have been omitted from Elinborg Larusdottir's report. And we wanted to be as sure as possible that Hafsteinn had not seen the written records before the communicator had given his identity in the early months of 1939.

The reader will already have noticed that the two relevant written records, those of the parish at Utskalar and those in the *Annals of Sudumes* (both written by the Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen) contain some different details. The mediumistic communication could not have come entirely from either one of these alone because neither contained all the details of the communication. The church records do not mention that Runki had been drinking alcohol when carried out to sea. And the *Annals of Sudurnes* does not give his last name (Runolfsson) nor mention the fact that his bones were buried at Utskalar. Of perhaps more importance, however, is the fact that although both accounts refer to the body as being "dismembered," neither states that a leg bone was missing when the remains were found and buried in January, 1880.¹⁹ But if we assume that the leg

¹⁹ We are not particularly concerned about the discrepancy between the communicator's explanation of how his body became dismembered and the explanation offered in the *Annals* of Sudumes. Both are unverified.

bone found in Ludvik's house had been part of Runki's dismembered body, then the interpretation of the case as an instance of clairvoyance (with or without some telepathy from living persons) requires that information conveying all the verified communicated facts must have come from three sources.

Because of the importance we attached to the detail of the missing bone, E.H. studied the church records of Utskalar (in the National Archives of Reykjavik) and the *Annals of Sudurnes* in the National Library of Reykjavik. He found that Elinborg Larusdottir and the Rev. Jon Thorarensen had reproduced them **accurately**²⁰ and that in fact neither mentioned that a leg (or bone) was missing from Runki's body when it was found in January, 1880.

Apart from the foregoing, it seems to us improbable that Hafsteinn could have read either report concerning Runki's death before the relevant sittings. He denied ever having examined the church records of Utskalar or having read the *Annals of Sudurnes*.

By 1939, and probably some time before that, the church records of Utskalar parish (for the period in question) had been transferred to the National Archives in Reykjavik and they have remained there since. The records of the National Archives are generally used only by scholars or persons associated with research in some way. In principle, however, they are open to the public. Each person using the materials of the Archives is supposed to sign the guest book.

We mentioned earlier that when E.H. questioned Hafsteinn about whether he had ever been in the National Archives, he said that he had not. He said he had once sent a man to the National Archives to obtain for him a copy of his mother's death certificate. Later, however, E.H. found Hafsteinn's signature in the guest book of the National Archives for the date November 24, 1939. (We obtained a photocopy of the relevant page of the guest book.) His name does not appear in the guest book earlier than this date in 1939. When E.H. mentioned later to Hafsteinn that his signature had been found in the guest book, he then recalled that he had actually gone to the National Archives with his friend Zophonias Petursson. He told E.H. that he had become curious to see for himself the details in the parish records which the sitters told him they had verified. At the same time he wanted to go to the National Archives to look up some matter

²⁰On examining the manuscript (in the National Library) of the diary kept by Rev. Sigurdur Sivertsen (and subsequently edited and published in 1953 as *Annals of Sudurnes* by the Rev. Jon Thorarensen), E.H. discovered that some relevant pages of the manuscript were missing. Upon inquiring about this, E.H. learned that when the Rev. Jon Thorarensen had made photocopies of the manuscript prior to preparing the book for publication the pages had been unbound. It appears that some pages had been lost in the binding. Unfortunately, the Rev. Jon Thorarensen had loaned his photocopies to a friend who had died and his widow could not find them. E.H., however, was able to compare one page of the manuscript with that reproduced in the Rev. Jon Thorarensen's published edition of the diary and found it quite accurate.

concerning his deceased mother. Zophonias Petursson (whose signature also appears in the visitors' register) corroborated Hafsteinn's revived memory of their visit to the National Archives on November 24, 1939. This can be interpreted as an honest error of memory of an event that happened 32 years before our inquiries of 1971-72. Hafsteinn still said that he had never been in the National Archives prior to November, 1939, which was about six months after the communicator had given his correct identity and all other essential details of the communication about himself.²¹

It would be misleading to say that the signatures in the guest book of the National Archives provide a completely reliable record of all persons consulting books and documents therein. We were naturally interested in finding in the guest book the signatures of the sitters who had verified the statements of the communicator in the church records of Utskalar parish which were kept in the National Archives. None of the names of the sitters appeared in the guest book. Niels Carlsson told E.H. that he had gone to the National Archives to look up the parish records of Utskalar. Upon explaining his mission to one of the archivists, the latter became interested in the matter, brought out the relevant book from the stacks, and examined it with Niels Carlsson. In the end Niels Carlsson verified (most of) the details of the communication from this examination of the parish records and left the Archives without signing the guest book.²² We ourselves experienced a laxness in asking visitors to sign the guest book at the Archives. We went there to check some records, spent quite some time in the visitors' room, and then left without being asked to sign the book. However, on an earlier visit to the Archives, E.H. *was*

²¹ In view of Hafsteinn's remarkable facility in bringing through proper names, it is not surprising that he has sometimes been suspected of furnishing his mind with information that may later prove useful in a sitting. We naturally paid particular attention to information informants could give us about evidence, as opposed to conjectures, indicating that Hafsteinn had in fact cheated in this way. One informant told us about two episodes known to him in which Hafsteinn had given incorrect information that corresponded with written records. However, in neither instance did it seem probable that the error arose from fraudulent use of written material by Hafsteinn. In one of these instances it seemed unlikely that he could have had access to the (unpublished) written material even if he had wanted to consult it. In a third episode (mentioned by the same informant) Hafsteinn said he had not been to a particular place when in fact he had. The person who discovered this accused Hafsteinn of lying, but our informant thought it more likely that he had had a lapse of memory, which is also a possible explanation for his earlier denial to E.H. that he had ever been in the National Archives. For an example of the difficulties in assessing correspondences between a medium's communications and published sources of information see Stevenson (1965).

²² In her account of the case which we have summarized, Elinborg Larusdotir (1946) stated that she had verified the communications in the parish records of Utskalar. However, it was Niels Carlsson who, on behalf of the other sitters, first went to the National Archives and examined the records of the parish of Utskalar.

asked to sign the guest book. The room where records may be consulted is quite small with places for only 18 visitors. It seems reasonably certain that any regular visitor would quickly become known to the staff of the Archives. All things considered, however, it appears best to place more reliance on individual memories than on the signatures in the guest book in deciding whether a particular person had visited the Archives at any given date.

We also considered the possibility that Hafsteinn had examined the manuscript of the *Annals of Sudumes* which in 1939 was kept in the National Library. The latter is actually in the same building as the National Archives in Reykjavik. Entrance to it did not require signing a guest book. The *Annals of Sudumes* existed only in manuscript form until edited and published in 1953. The manuscript, however, could be consulted readily by persons requesting to see it. The main obstacle to anyone doing so was that very few people knew of its existence prior to its publication in 1953. Unlike the parish records, in which every minister is required to note the major events of his pastorate, the *Annals of Sudumes* was a private diary that the Rev. Sigurdur B. Sivertsen, the clergyman of Utskalar for the period in question, had kept more or less for his own interest. We cannot say whether or not he wrote it with the thought of eventual publication. But in any case we do know that it existed only as a manuscript which was known to only a few scholars until 1953. It is virtually impossible that Hafsteinn could have accidentally "stumbled on it." He would have had to be in the National Library deliberately looking for this manuscript, or something like it, in order to have come across it. To suppose this is to imply fraud and this seems to us an improbable interpretation of the case.

No daily newspapers existed in the period 1879-80 in Iceland and therefore no obituary or notice of Runki's death could have appeared in that form. Two biweekly newspapers were published in southern and western Iceland in 1879-80. E.H. examined the issues from September, 1879, through February, 1880, of both papers and found nothing in them about Runki. This is not surprising since these small newspapers contained mostly political news or governmental announcements. They published occasional obituaries of prominent persons, but would ignore the death of an obscure man like Runki, even supposing the editor had heard of it.

Another possibility exists for normal communication. We refer to the fact that some persons still living in the late 1930s and early 1940s knew that a femur had been "going around" in Sandgerdi and that a carpenter had placed it in the walls of the house later purchased by Ludvik Gudmundsson. It seems to us quite improbable that any of these persons knew anything about Runki. At any rate, they did not consciously connect the bone with his name when Ludvik Gudmundsson was making inquiries in the area about the existence

of a bone belonging to a person of that name. It is just barely possible, however, that one of these elderly persons, born perhaps before 1880, had known as a child about the rather unusual death of Runki and had later forgotten this fact while at the same time retaining a vague conscious knowledge about the missing femur. If such a person existed and had been talkative, what he knew might somehow have reached Hafsteinn-perhaps through third parties. (This would be apart from telepathic communication, which we shall consider later.)

It seemed worth while for us to obtain whatever information we could bearing on the above questions. Because of the long lapse of time since the death of Runki and also since the sittings in 1938-39, we did not suppose that many firsthand witnesses would still be alive. Nevertheless, E.H. was able to meet some helpful informants.

The first of these was Helgi Thordarson, who was born in southern Iceland in 1901 and moved to Sandgerdi in 1914. (He was living in Keflavik in 1972.) He had lived in the house purchased by Ludvik Gudmundsson in Sandgerdi and is mentioned in the report by Elinborg Larusdottir that we summarized earlier. He remembered that a femur had been kept in the house later bought by Ludvik Gudmundsson. It was believed that the femur had been brought up by the sea. The bone was not associated with any particular man. Helgi Thordarson also remembered that when a room on the second floor of the house was being remodeled, the carpenter, Asbjorn **Palsson**, placed the femur between the walls. This happened not long before Ludvik Gudmundsson bought the house. After the sitting at which Runki identified himself, Ludvik Gudmundsson came to Helgi Thordarson (because he had lived in the house Ludvik Gudmundsson had bought) and inquired of him about the leg the communicator had claimed was in his (Ludvik's) house. Helgi Thordarson referred Ludvik Gudmundsson to the carpenter, Asbjorn **Palsson**, who showed Ludvik where he had placed the femur in the wall.²³ Helgi Thordarson could not state definitely whether he had heard of Runki before Ludvik Gudmundsson told him about the mediumistic communication. He was, however, quite certain that the femur had not been connected with Runki's name before the sittings.

Our inquiries led us also to Jonas Bjarnason, Runki's grandson. He had known since his childhood about the manner of his grandfather's disappearance. He also had known that the body, when found and buried, consisted of "remnants" after it had presumably been eaten by shrimp. He did not know, however, whether or not a part of a leg was missing when his grandfather's body was buried. He was born after the death of his grandfather.

²³ This account differs in some details from that of Elinborg Larusdottir's book (1946) previously summarized.

An informant, Johannes Jonsson, who had been a shipowner in Sandgerdi since 1917, told E.H. that Ludvik Gudmundsson had told him that after he (Ludvik) had become interested in Runki and the leg bone had been found in his house, his inquiries had led him to believe that the femur had been recovered in the early 1920s when there was an excavation for a house on the beach. Another informant, Gisli Gudmundsson, said that the femur had been in Ludvik's house when he lived there in 1922, and that it had been brought there the year before, probably from the sea. Gisli Gudmundsson (1948) had heard about Runki, but stated that the femur had never been associated with any particular man. Gisli's half-brother, Einar, also remembered that the femur was in the house in 1922. The bone, they both agreed, had been that of an unusually tall man. Thus the most reliable information indicates that the bone was discovered in the early 1920s. It does not seem to have been nearly so widely known in the neighborhood as the two skulls mentioned above which were associated with fishermen who had drowned just before the turn of the century. None of the firsthand informants questioned recalled that the femur, when it was found, was associated with Runki (or with any particular person). This is not surprising since the bone was not discovered until about 40 years after Runki's death.

E.H. also learned from the Rev. Jon Thorarensen, who, because of editing the *Annals of Sudurnes*, was a possible source of information, that he had never met Hafsteinn prior to 1940 and had never heard of the missing femur before the development of the case even though he was brought up in the part of Iceland concerned in it.

As an aid to the understanding of the rather complicated details of this case, we present in the Tabulation below a summary of the statements made by the communicator, together with sources of verification for them and some comments.

DISCUSSION

Before we offer interpretations of this case we shall review for readers several of what we consider its important weak and strong points.

Its first weak point derives from the initial denial by Hafsteinn that he had ever been in the National Archives. This may have been an honest lapse of memory, but other interpretations cannot be excluded. One of these would be that Hafsteinn had, prior to the relevant sittings, obtained much of the information communicated about Runki by consulting the parish records of Utskalar in the National Archives. Our other knowledge of Hafsteinn does not support the idea of such a deliberate hoax. It is also possible that Hafsteinn had remembered all along that he had gone once to the National Archives *after* the relevant sittings in order to check on the

Tabulation

SUMMARY OF THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE COMMUNICATOR RUNOLFUR RUNOLFSSON (RUNKI)

<i>Item</i>	<i>Verification</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1. His name was Runolfur Runolfsson.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	<i>Annals of Sudumes</i> gives only the deceased man's first name, Runolfur.
2. He died at the age of 52.	Parish records of Melar cited in Larusdottir (1946)	These church records showed that Runolfur Runolfsson was born on December 25, 1828. He was thus in his 51st year when he died and <i>in</i> his 52nd when his body was found in January, 1880. The parish records gave his age at death as 52. These would presumably record it as of the date when his body was found and he could be officially declared dead instead of only missing.
3. He lived in Kolga or Klappakot.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	
4. He had a wife.	Parish records of Utskalar Elisabet Helgadottir, Runki's granddaughter	The parish records state that Runki was living with Gudrun Bjarnadottir, but not that they were married. Elisabet Helgadottir said that her grandparents were married.
5. On the day of his death he had been "on a journey from Keflavik."	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	

<i>Item</i>	<i>Verification</i>	<i>Comments</i>
6. He had stopped at Thordarson's house in Sandgerdi.	Unverified	It is nevertheless virtually certain that Runki passed through Sandgerdi before he reached the place where the tide carried him away. This place (Flankastadir) is close to Sandgerdi and between Keflavik and Klappakot, his destination.
7. The weather was extremely bad.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	
8. His house was only about 15 minutes' walk away [from Sveinbjom Thordarson's house].	Verified by us on our visit to the area between Sandgerdi and Klappakot	
9. He left by himself and walked over the kambinn until he reached Flankastadir.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	The parish records do not say exactly where Runki's body was washed up. But it was conjectured that it had been washed away in the area of Flankastadir.
10. He sat down and drank [alcoholic spirits] from a bottle he had with him.	<i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	<i>Annals of Sudumes</i> simply records that "he had been rather drunk with brandy that he carried with him."

<i>Item</i>	<i>Verification</i>	<i>Comments</i>
11. He fell asleep and the tide came in and carried him away.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	The parish records conjecture that Runki "was carried away by the storm." <i>Annals of Sudumes</i> states "the sea carried him away." That he was asleep at this time is unverified, but probable, since it is unlikely that he would have drowned if he had been awake.
12. This happened in October, 1879.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	The parish records give the exact date as October 16, 1879.
13. He [his body] was not found until January, 1880.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	The remains were buried on January 8, 1880, presumably a few days or less after being washed up and found.
14. His body was washed back by the sea and then dogs and ravens dismembered it.	Parish records of Utskalar <i>Annals of Sudumes</i>	Both records state only that the body was dismembered, not how this came about. The <i>Annals of Sudumes</i> includes a conjecture that seals had eaten and dismembered the body and shrimp had further damaged it.
15. One thigh bone was missing.		
16. It was carried out again to sea, and later washed up at Sandgerdi.		In the early 1920s an unidentified thigh bone was placed in the house (later owned by Ludvik Gudmundsson) in Sandgerdi. Presumably the bone had been found near the house, but we do not know this definitely.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Verification</i>	<i>Comments</i>
17. The thigh bone was in Ludvik [Gudmundsson]'s house.	E. Larusdottir (1946) Helgi Thordarson, former tenant in Ludvik Gudmundsson's house at Sandgerdi Johannes Jonsson Gisli Gudmundsson	A thigh bone was found in Ludvik Gudmundsson's house. It cannot be definitely identified as one of Runki's thigh bones. Helgi Thordarson had participated in the search for the bone in the wall of Ludvik Gudmundsson's house and its discovery. See text for details of E.H.'s interviews with all the informants for this item.
18. His body was buried in Utskalar graveyard.	Parish records of Utskalar	
19. He had been very tall.	Jonas Bjarnason, Runki's grandson	Runki was three "alin" (Danish "ell") tall. This is roughly six feet one inch.
20. There was a record of his statements "in the church book of Utskalar."	Parish records of Utskalar	

accuracy of the communications from Runki; but he then suppressed this information in talking at first with E.H. out of a fear that we might think he had gone to the National Archives before the sittings for the purpose of getting up a fraud. Knowing he was innocent of the latter offense, he may have decided to deceive us about a visit to the National Archives.

A second weakness of the case lies in the fact that the bone found in the wall of Ludvik Gudmundsson's house at Sandgerdi has never been definitely identified as Runki's. Although it is known that Runki's body, when found on the beach, was "dismembered" or "torn asunder" these phrases by themselves do not imply that any parts of the skeleton were missing. It was later generally assumed by all persons concerned that the femur found in the wall of Ludvik Gudmundsson's house had been part of Runki's body. The facts that the femur was a long one and that Runki was known to have been over six feet in height support this conjecture. So does the comparative rarity of finding bodies and bones washed up on the shore in that part of Iceland. It is natural to link any remains that are found on the beach with the few persons known to have died in accidents off the coast of that area. Nevertheless, when all this has been said, we are left without clear evidence that the femur found in Ludvik's house had been part of Runki's body.

We seriously considered an effort to have disinterred both Runki's body and the femur so that we could determine if they matched. We even obtained the consent of Runki's granddaughter and grandson for this. Unfortunately, the cemetery at Utskalar is rather large and there were no clues as to the location of any individual bones. The gravestones were mostly of fairly recent origin, although some dated from the early nineteenth century and a few from the eighteenth century. The graves seemed crowded together and we believe the cemetery contains many unmarked graves and also "layered" interments of bodies placed at different levels in the same plot. The Rev. Gudmundur Gudmundsson, clergyman of Utskalar, later concurred with E.H. in our discouraging conclusion about the infeasibility of a search for Runki's bones in the cemetery.

On the strong side of the case we have the remarkable feature of the communicator Runki expressing pleasure at meeting Ludvik Gudmundsson when he first joined the sittings and saying that "his bone" was in Ludvik's house. Then subsequently a femur was found in Ludvik's house as stated by the communicator. None of the sitters knew of this bone's existence nor had they heard of the living person the communicator claimed to have been. The discovery of the femur harmonized with all the other verified statements made by the communicator if we assume that the femur had been part of the living Runki's body. Let us suppose for a moment that this assumption is incorrect and that the discovered femur was **not** Runki's. The medium

would still have had to put together an unusual group of details forming a coherent story in which the femur had a very natural place. This justifies us in inquiring further about how the medium might have obtained all the correct information communicated.

We shall consider the possibility that Hafsteinn had somehow acquired knowledge about Runolfur Runolfsson through normal means from (a) living persons informed about the essential facts of the communicator's death, from (b) the written records about it, or from (c) a combination of both these sources. We shall consider these hypotheses in turn.

As we mentioned earlier, Hafsteinn spent about two years in the area of Keflavik and, although he denied having done so, it is conceivable that during this time he had gone over to Sandgerdi (approximately six miles away) and there learned more than he afterwards remembered about Runki. And although none of the older persons who knew about the femur that had been placed in the wall of a house at Sandgerdi many years before had identified it with any particular person, much less with Runki, it is not beyond imagination to suppose that Hafsteinn somehow put together various fragments of information that he picked up and later integrated them into the subsequently verified communications.

If we decide that Hafsteinn had no normal contact with persons knowledgeable about Runki's death, we may suppose next that he obtained his information from such persons through telepathy. We can identify several possible candidates for the role of "agent" in this exchange. But none would seem to qualify satisfactorily in all respects.

We might consider the older men of Sandgerdi, especially the carpenter, Asbjorn **Palsson**, who knew that the femur had been placed in the wall, as sources of information about it. But, as we have mentioned, these persons had never identified the femur with any particular person and could hardly have been the sources for *all* the correct information given by the communicator.

The Rev. Jon Thorarensen was a source of information about the area of Sandgerdi and knew about the death of Runolfur Runolfsson. But he did not know Hafsteinn before 1940 and knew nothing about the existence of a leg bone in a wall of Ludvik Gudmundsson's house before it was found there.

Jonas Bjarnason, the communicator's grandson, knew from his childhood about the manner in which his grandfather had disappeared during the storm, but he did not know whether a part of a leg had been missing when his body was buried. And he knew nothing about his grandfather being drunk at the time of his death. (This he only learned after the publication of the first report of the case by Elinborg Larusdottir.) Jonas Bjarnason had heard earlier about skulls and a leg bone being in Ludvik Gudmundsson's house at

Sandgerdi, but he had not connected these bones with any particular person, including his grandfather. If the case is to be interpreted as an instance of telepathy between the medium and living persons, then Jonas Bjarnason would seem to be a most likely source of telepathically derived information, but he also could not qualify as the sole depot of all the correct information communicated.

The available written records provide similar difficulties if we wish to suppose that the medium by clairvoyance obtained all the correct communicated information from some one single source. We have already mentioned that the main details about Runki's death were in two written records in Reykjavik, the church records of Utskalar and the *Annals of Sudumes*. But each of these records omitted one or two significant details given in the other. The medium denied that he had ever studied these records, but even if he had done so, he could not have obtained from them alone the correct information about the leg bone being in Ludvik Gudmundsson's house.

To sum up the possibilities for the medium to have acquired all the correctly communicated information, it does not seem feasible to attribute all of this information to any single person or any single written source. And this would be true, we believe, whether the medium acquired the information normally or by extrasensory perception. We think, therefore, that some process of integration of details derived from different persons or other sources must be supposed in the interpretation of the case. It may be simplest to explain this integration as due to Runki's survival after his physical death with retention of many memories and their subsequent communication through the mediumship of Hafsteinn. On the other hand, sensitives have been known to accomplish remarkable feats of deriving and integrating information without the participation of any purported discarnate personality.

This case, however, cannot be satisfactorily interpreted on the basis of the cognitive details alone. Unlike most cases of "drop in" communicators the present one contains rather rich behavioral details and in that respect resembles many of the cases of the reincarnation type in Asia (Stevenson, 1974). Advocates of the hypothesis of telepathy between the medium and living persons must also account, in our opinion, for the vivid personation by the medium of a character quite different from his own. Unfortunately, we do not know what Runki's character was really like. The *Annals of Sudumes* mentions that he was drunk at the time he got carried out to sea, but this is the only suggestion of a trait given in the written records. We cannot therefore say that the personation shown by the communicator corresponded to the character of Runki, since we have such scanty information about it. But the communicator nevertheless exhibited a well-defined personality harmonious with the little that is known or can be conjectured about the living Runki. There were first the

incessant importunate requests for the restoration of a missing leg. Then there were brusque, even rude manners, and demands for snuff, coffee, and alcohol. And finally the communicator showed a rather inexplicable reserve about revealing his identity which went on for well over a year. These behavioral traits seem entirely what we should expect of a man who was attached to sensuous pleasures and his own physical body. They accord with the known facts concerning the death of the real Runki. The reader must decide whether he thinks Hafsteinn had a greater motivation to behave in the manner described over several years than had the real Runki supposing that he had survived death.

The story of Runolfur Runolfsson did not end with the burial of the femur removed from the walls in Ludvik Gudmundsson's house at Sandgerdi. Runki continued to communicate through Hafsteinn. Although, as we have already mentioned, he earlier rejected a proposal that he modify his rough ways, he did in fact gradually do so. He became gentler and also increasingly helpful to other communicators. Eventually (in 1949) he became the medium's main control and has continued to act in this capacity ever since. E.H. has attended a number of *séances* with Hafsteinn at which Runki has been the control. In 1972 Hafsteinn came to New York for the first time and at *séances* we both attended at the A.S.P.R. Runki communicated and played an important part in the proceedings.

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