

The Wife's Lament

I wrack this riddle about myself
full miserable, my very own experience.
I can speak it—
what I endured in misery,
after I was grown, both new and old, 5
none greater than now. Always I suffered
the torment of my wracked ways.

My lord departed at first, from his tribe here
over the tossing of waves—
I watched a sorrow at dawn 10
wondering where in these lands
my chieftain might be.
Then I departed myself to venture,
seeking his followers, a friendless wayfarer
out of woeful need. 15

They insinuated, the kinsmen of that man,
by secret thought, to separate us two
so that we two, widest apart in the worldly realm,
should live most hatefully—and it harrowed me.

My lord ordered me to take this grove 20
for a home — very few dear to me
in this land, almost no loyal friends.

Therefore my mind so miserable —
than I met a well-suited man for myself
so misfortunate and mind-sorrowing, 25
thought kept close, plotting a crime.

Keeping cheery, we vowed quite often
that none but death could separate us.

That soon changed...

it's now as if it had never been — 30
our friendship. I must, far and near,
endure the feuding of my dearly beloved.

My husband ordered me anchored
in a woody grove, under an oak-tree
within this earthen cave. 35
Ancient is the earth-hall:
I am entirely longing—

Dark are the valleys, the mountains so lofty,
bitter these hovels, overgrown with thorns.
Shelters without joy. So many times here 40
the disappearance of my husband
seizes me with a stewing.

All my friends dwell in the dirt,
I loved them while they lived,
now guarding their graves, 45
when I go forth alone
in the darkness of daybreak
under the oak-tree
outside this hollowed earth.

There I may sit a summer-long day,
where I can weep for my exiled path, 50
my many miseries—therefore I can never
rest from these my mind's sorrowings,
not from all these longings
that seize me in my living.

A young man must always be sad at heart, 55
hard in the thoughts inside,
also he must keep a happy bearing —
but also breast-cares, suffering never-ending grief—

May he depend only upon himself
for all his worldly pleasures. 60
May he be stained with guilt far and wide,
throughout the lands of distant folk,
so that my once-friend should sit under the
stony cliffs,
rimed by storms, my weary-minded ally,
flowed around by waters in his dreary hall. 65

My former companion may know a great
mind-sorrow—
remembering too often his joyful home.

Woe be to that one who must
wait for their beloved with longing.