

The Wife's Lament

I make this song about me full sadly
my own wayfaring. I a woman tell
what griefs I had since I grew up
new or old never more than now.
Ever I know the dark of my exile. 5

First my lord went out away from his people
over the wave-tumult. I grieved each dawn
wondered where my lord my first on earth
might be.
Then I went forth a friendless exile
to seek service in my sorrow's need. 10
My man's kinsmen began to plot
by darkened thought to divide us two
so we most widely in the world's kingdom
lived wretchedly and I suffered longing.

My lord commanded me to move my
dwelling here. 15
I had few loved ones in this land
or faithful friends. For this my heart grieves:
that I should find the man well matched
to me
hard of fortune mournful of mind
hiding his mood thinking of murder. 20

Blithe was our bearing often we vowed
that but death alone would part us two
naught else. But this is turned round
now . . . as if it never were
our friendship. I must far and near 25
bear the anger of my beloved.
The man sent me out to live in the woods
under an oak tree in this den in the earth.
Ancient this earth hall. I am all longing.
The valleys are dark the hills high 30
the yard overgrown bitter with briars
a joyless dwelling. Full oft the lack of
my lord
seizes me cruelly here. Friends there are
on earth
living beloved lying in bed
while I at dawn am walking alone 35
under the oak tree through these earth halls.
There I may sit the summerlong day
there I can weep over my exile
my many hardships. Hence I may not rest
from this care of heart which belongs to me ever
nor all this longing that has caught me in this life.

May that young man be sad-minded always
hard his heart's thought while he must wear
a blithe bearing with care in the breast 45
a crowd of sorrows. May on himself depend
all his world's joy. Be he outlawed far
in a strange folk-land— that my beloved sits
under a rocky cliff rimed with frost
a lord dreary in spirit drenched with water 50
in a ruined hall. My lord endures
much care of mind. He remembers too often
a happier dwelling. Woe be to them
that for a loved one must wait in longing.