

Childbed (cenotaph song)

by Mia Avramut

The færing sways asleep in golden mire. I must untie the oars, set you adrift, wife of young years. Scant form in wooden womb, tender no longer, but whole with inner fruit this morning, shall ashen soon in the horizon pyre.

Those who don't die, desire.

Through daylight bursts Sunna's voice beckons. You, wife, I push into her open hearth laboring fires. Long tangled spears fan over waters! In blinding realm you shall soon bask, this song your tomb but from afar. And yet you, one so sweet, I now once more embrace barefoot in this here hollowed wooden womb.

Body across earth-laden boat springs up into my addled arms, ready to raid past isles. Sea raises teal skulls all 'round us, in jest, as we elope further asea, lower afield, content.

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That the Norse relish this, should be a myth. That the Rus, that the Northmen dream of this, should be a myth.

That which we made, we should have lived.

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It's here, in this low unknown inlet, so sheltered from the seas, that the waves are born; from here, every Autumn, wondrous teal beings of the sea depths stagger their strangeness to shores, in worship of land, hailing the end of war. Their hauberk of entrails, salt crystal- crusted, glistens with rustle. Whale bones shine hidden inside, shine like lovemaking. Listen, my love. I suspect them of loving you, too.

Here, my true wife. Fare forth, gaze in my gaze. One more cold draught of mead, sprinkled so you two can take my name, entire. Not anymore you walk the sands, not for a moment your breast heaves with relief. And here is your red reindeer antler comb. There, terracotta, glass. Blood amber beads and clasp, rope belts, spindles

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and sickle. Much salted fish in fat clay pots. Woolen cloth, gosling feathers, dregs and mire.

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Your many belts like snakes with copper eyes once circled childless waist, now close wrapped knees. Knives, Frigga's candle spent, shell hull, seal skin snug draped on slim ribs, for all days. You're taller than this færing wide, your head so tilted, neck so bent, long seeking warmth across your chest unsuckled.

Decomposition hides in tears and salt. Upended birthing carved red rivers in the shore and in their Delta wake left one torn artifact, you two.

Wife, how your fingers curl onto this larger womb, replete with earth and all the wood your no-name wight chopped, drunk on wise intoxicating water, chanting, calling.

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Brow smeared with red wet sands, ready to sail. Linen shroud thin and knotted marigold, apron dress celadon. Your eyes, my cloudy keepsake charred spread smoke over loud inauspicious seas. A morning will soon silence all the waves.

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Those who don't die, desire, descend. No song aloft arises from my irk. The seeing chieftain, not of sea, nor sand, nor boat, I till nightfall stammer alive, dig boneless trenches against tiding dregs and lathe, hunt, wallow, plow the hours, call in aweing gusts, cast gauntlet, garth of want.

All the while here in mine whole-wile earth eye blossoms the wound born branded by a spear.

