

What misery I need to write
In the language of Angle-saxes
The tongue of islanders
To bring you my words
Have my meaning reach you,
But am I not a rune singer
Who came to Karelia
Reached the glades of Väino-land
The heaths of Kalevala
For I heard of wondrous words
Of songs being put about
Meaningful ones being set forth?

Let me then lay down by this scroll
In the meter of Kalevala, in Kanteletar' verses
The sad tale of our end, neither great nor small
For if Pekka Halonen met here a woman
I surely enough, to this landscape lost one!

When I first saw you in Yamato
In spring, many seasons ago
Your hips warm as a forge
Your shoulders of copper made
Like old Väinämöinen I came
And uttered a word, spoke thus:
“Don't for anyone, young maid
Except me, beautiful maiden
Wear the beads around your neck
Set the stone upon your breast
Put your head into a braid
Bind your hair with silk!”

Back in those early days, dearest Aia
Like Youkahainen's sister, young Aino
Your proudness as a shield, your fears as a reason
You fled one month, you fled two
Soon fled a third month as well.

And after twelve months had passed
Like her mother said to the girl
I came back to you, spoke thus:
“For the sweetness of the sun
For the splendid moonlight's grace
For all the sky's loveliness
There are berries on a hill
And in meadows strawberries too,
For you luckless one, to pick

Further afield, not always
In your father's glades, upon
Your younger brother's backwoods".

Only then, weebegone, dearest Aia
Like Youkahainen's sister, young Aino
After a year of escape
Did you stop fleeing
Like hard snow under a ridge
Like water in a deep well;
Through mountains, soughing spruces
Through forests, grizzled aspens
You stepped one day, you stepped two
Till on the third day
You came upon the sea
Joined me at the headland's tip!

Together then, for many months
Did we swim the vasty deeps
For many summer days
Many nights in a row
Till the edge of every tides.

But soon, as old Väinämöinen
On his way to Darkland
My proudness as a shield
My fears as a reason
Did I put this into words:
"Woe is me, a luckless boy
To be driven by billows
On these wide waters
Neither do I know
How to be, which way to live
In this evil age
With time running out".

And soon as a rotting spruce trunk
A rotting pine stump
Helped by an unfriendly friend
On a sharp reef, a cliff of iron
Did I cast our vessel ashore.
And there, a hundred wounds at my side
A hundred wounds at yours
Wrenched, we remained at seashore.
We wept two, three nights
The same number of days too,
Did not know the way to go

Nor, strangers, the route for home.

Like Ahti, the wanton Farmind
Angered by Kyllikki his wild maiden
I thought witches had bewitched me
Water-wizards hexed me
And soon doomed all of womenfolk

We remained scattered, shattered,
Until many months later
This was a week ago now
When following an eagle,
Bird of the air, again we tried:
Like the Eternal Bard did with Aino
From the newly built raft
Did I fished you again
In the form of a steelhead
A lively silverfish, a mermaid
Soon to loose you again
To the open expanses of the sea.

O madman, for my madness
Fool, for my manhood!
In this evil age
This time of misfortunes
This life running short
She I waited for always
And half my lifetime
The wave-wife's watery maid
The water's latest daughter
To be a lifetime's mate
But lost her again to the waves
Down below the deep billows.

What now? In bad spirits,
Sorely confuse and furious can I do?
I have destroyed a good boat
Lost my willingness to fish
And the sharpest of my spears!

Should I, myself also, Aia
Wisdomless child, like Lemminkäinen
Travel now to the far North
To court the daughters of Pohjola?
Even if, full-blooded rogue
I truly have the wanderlust
Of Kullervo, the proudness

Of Youkahainen, and even
The steel sledge of Ilmarinen,
I won't, wisdomless lass
Take the maid by force
Tame her against her will!

Since time has come to drink
To wash ones brain with ale
To clean ones soul in lager
These verses to you I wrote
In an inkpad of alcohol
For beer can't be brewed
Without water, nor of course
Without harsh fire
Drinking two, three hours
The same number of bottles too,
To the Demon's elk health
To all heaven-dwelling gods

Why couldn't you stay calm
Why couldn't I stay still
As we were drifting
As we were flickering
On the shallow waters of youth?

Must I, again, criss-cross the water
Along one straight, across two
Soon through a third one too
Both hands on my fishing-lines
Catching all kind of fishes
Till the sun from its stronghold
Emerge above hilltops?
It is hard to be fireless
Great woe to be flameless
Past the sea-mew's rocky reefs
Past a hundred headlands' tips
Below a hundred islands

But let me put this into words:
One has died, two have been born!
Who have better beaters, who
Have handles a span longer
And seines twice more terrible

At last, with a gloomy heart
To the foggy shores of lake Pielinen
I entrust this empty bottle

To this bohemian lager my message:
Down below the deep billows,
Upon the black mud of Väino-land
May our love remain in dark waters
Among fish-hooks and streams;
For by an ell my life will pass
By a span my frame grow old
And my whole body be blighted
When I hear the spring cuckoo.

Eric Van Hove – Mäkrä, summit of Ukko-Koli, Finnish Karelia, August 2006.