The Husband’s Message
translated by Kevin Crossley-Holland

Now that we’re alone I can explain
The secret meaning of this stave. I was once a child.
But now one of the sons of men, living far from here,
Sends me on errands over the salt-streams,
Commands me to carry a cunningly-carved letter.
At my master’s command I have often crossed the sea,
Sailed in the ship’s hold to strange destinations.
And this time I have come especially
To sow assurance in your mind
About my lord’s great love for you.
I swear that you will find in him
Great faith to you, great loyalty.
O lady adorned with such lovely ornaments,
He who carved the words in this wood
Bids me ask you to remember
The oaths you swore so long ago together;
In those distant days you lived in the same country,
Lived in love together,
Sharing one estate in the beautiful city.
Then a feud, a cruel vendetta, forced him to leave
This land of happy people; I was told to tell you,
Joyfully, that you should undertake a journey
Just as soon as you hear the cuckoo’s sad song,
That mournful sound in the mountain woods.
After that, let no man delay you
Or stop you from sailing over the waves.
Go down to the sea, the home of the gull;
Sail south from here over the salt-streams
To the land where land waits in high expectations.
He nurses no greater wish in the world
(With his own words he told me),
Than that both of you together, by the grace of God,
May give rings once again to men in the mead-hall;
Bestow gifts as before on companions
And warriors. He has won
Wealth enough, though he lives
Far away amongst a foreign people
In a beautiful land.
Forced by the feud to launch his boat from here,
He went over the waves alone in his youth,
Set forth on the way of the flood, eager to
Depart and divide the quiet waters. Now at last your lord
Leaves his sorrows behind him. He will lack nothing,
Neither horses, nor treasure, nor joy in the mead-hall,
O daughter of the prince,
He will want nothing else in the world
If only he may have you for his own,
Fulfilling the former vow between you.
I hear the runes S. and R.,
EA., W. and M. join in an oath
That he will wait for you in that country,
And will always love you for as long as he lives,
Faithful and true to your vows to each other,
The oaths you swore so long ago together.