

**She Wore the Sun in her Periwinkle-Blue Eyes**

It seems only yesterday  
I was squatting on this stool  
as if pushing a huge boulder  
from a hill, bearing down,  
someone wiping my hair  
twisted ropes of black  
mixed with sweat and tears,  
streaming down my face.

Then, seven days barely passed,  
a midwife's bare foot pushing  
into my groin, pulling my left hand  
then the right, flushing me clean  
to be a wife again.

Year after year, year after year  
it seemed, till one day I left  
the key hanging down the back of my clothes.

*Take it off* my man said, his  
fumbling fingers touching  
the hard metal.

*Tomorrow* I answered, the key digging  
into my flesh, each knot on the string  
hard as a bead as he mounted me.

*Tomorrow* I would say to myself  
the next morning, tightening each  
knot in the worn-out string, hiding  
it again inside my clothes.

Then one day there was no need  
to take it off. No need to put  
the amber bead between my breasts.  
I took the bearing stool into the shed,  
to sit on while milking  
the goats.

*Where has the wreath gone he  
gave me that one spring morning?  
Come with me he whispered, to fetch back the May.*

*And he nailed the wreath of wild  
thyme, tufted with periwinkle  
to the door of my parents' home.  
A year later I took it with me,  
hung it on my own cottage door.*

*In May donkeys mate people said  
shrugging their shoulders,  
but I didn't care.*

Now the amber bead hangs above  
the clay pot of thyme sitting on  
the window sill. Early each Sunday  
morning, when the sun looks through the  
amber, I take it off the nail  
into the good room where the half-blind  
mirror stands and I let the bead swing  
between my breasts, the amber touching  
each nipple like a golden drop  
of Hymettus honey. I feel the nuzzling  
of a baby's mouth, my breasts swell  
with thick, rich milk, a sweet pain  
spreading, gripping my womb.  
Sometimes I pray for the mouths  
for which there was no need  
to wear the amber bead.

Last summer I saw a foreign lady  
 walking past our cottage in high heels.  
 She was wearing the sun in her periwinkle-blue eyes.  
 She waved to me, pointing to  
 the amber bead hanging  
 in my window, then she touched her  
 own five long strands of amber swinging,  
 reaching down to her waist.

She hurried toward a dark-eyed  
 man waiting down the road, holding  
 a sprig of wild thyme in his hand.

Lady, tonight I shall take down  
 the amber bead, wear it to adorn  
 my dress when my man comes home.

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Based on Greek peasant remedies and customs:

Births are often performed in a sitting position in a chair cut away at the seat.

A week after the birth the midwife presses the vulva of the woman with her foot, pulling each hand in turn, then a vaginal douche is given her. Intercourse can then be resumed.

An amber bead hung around the neck of a pregnant woman insures a plentiful supply of milk.

A key is hung in the back of the clothes to stop lactation.

Wreaths of flowers are hung by young men on the doors of their sweethearts whom they want to woo.

Wild thyme blossoming in May produces the Hymettus honey.

*lala heine-koehn*