



Aino Beside the Boulder (Finnish Kalevala, runo 4-5)
By Ella Shropshire

Aino sitting on the boulder at sea, seven skirts drowned
Golden rings and copper belts lost to the waters,
The waves rising for the only one, the promised bride

Dive down, at last,
And be not a hen, sitting docile on a knee, be more than open hands and heart,
Wash away the guilt of refusing it.
Let no hands, their lifetime spent longing, take up my own,
Not those of a man or woman or in-between or outside,
Let me be a gull and ride alone and free on the wind,
Let me be a sprite in the sea,
A sister to the whitefish, a brother to the fishes.
I will be no hen, I will not sit forever a lifelong mate on your knee,
I will not kindle your light, bake your honeybread
And lay out your bed
None shall do this for me, a watery maid to the water-wife,
Whom you knew no way to keep,
No storms, or calling songs, or perfumed winds can bring me back to shore,
For it is my nature
To swim in the tides, a salmon in the sea,

A water-maid below deep billows, a sister to the whitefish,
Dancing upon the black mud.
No hen on the knee, no fish to be caught, no salmon to be cut for you.
I am Aino on upon the sea-soaked rock, glittering in the sun
"And the ache would no more ache,"
and I, a bird would be free of reaching hands,
I, a watery maid, loveless and free.

Aino beside the boulder, swimming,
A sister to the whitefish, a brother to the fishes,
Her wedding clothes, a golden cross, drowned all,
The waves carry her, the only one, Atho's peerless child.