

**SIGRID OLAFSDOTTIR'S SOLILOQUEY**  
**Prologue**

I met a woman at a fair, a stone cutter, beautiful art work in slate and granite.

That was 2012, the Common Ground Fair in Unity, Maine, the 'hippie fair' as locals call it.

I had once carved stone and often felt a vibration in my wrists - chisel on stone. Might this one day cause pain? I asked her ...

A trance-like look came over her ... 'No ... but ...' and she told me this story ... the spirit of which haunted me so. Here is that story.

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I left this house, this place, and set sail on uncharted seas, a young pup, more enthusiasm than sense, an insatiable yearning driving me to drink every drop of life's sweet pleasure. *[A lusty laugh]* And I savored every sip! Oh, how I embraced every passion, each new enticement an aching urge to push onward, ever deeper into an alluring unknown, never looking back, a cascading boulder, tumbling headlong into whatever lay beyond.

All was not joy. One cannot coase these rocky coasts, with no more guide than youthful glow, and not be ... *[pause, reflective]* but that was long ago. Thus life passed, year upon year. Sometimes pain made to ease when, on a day or evening, I, under full stroke, felt anew life's lusty draw ... yet all things pass - this, too, passed.

One calm, cool, moonlit night, I sat alone, oars stowed, at my ease, reflections of sky, crag and tree shimmering in the water beneath. The gentle swaying of the boat stilled my heart as I slowly breathed in the silence all around. It was then I thought to look, for the first time in so very long, at whom I had become.

What shock to see in the water's gaze, a stranger's face, all hollowed eyes and emptiness. Who was this creature? This grey-brown hag? This feral soul? Could it be me? I, once so fair ... *[to audience]*... I once had long black hair, skin as white as winter's snow... full lips, not rough or parched ... *[long pause]*. Frightened now, a first time doubt, had I, unknowing, crossed life's arc?

Ages passed ... I wandered on, full unaware, until I came to journey's end in this place, the very place, whence it all began. Home. *[pause]* What is in a word? I was welcomed as though a returning queen ... as though the ensuing years, mere reverie ... and now, upon awaking ... *[long pause, stroking hair]* My father's touch ... he combed my hair.

As evening's fire's embers cooled, I went off into my room, laid upon the old oak bed, a childhood haven, now freshly made, and offered a silent prayer. And as I prayed, all the tensions of all those years melted into a soothing haze ... memories, more true, more real than they had ever been – a cloth doll, with buttoned flap, a carved toy, my mother's ... *[feeling imagined cloth, a tear]* ... cap – she, now, so long dead. *[pause to recover]*

In the instant before sleep, I heard, again, the sound of my father at his trade ... chisel on stone ... every small, seeming-meaningless step, forever etched by this sound, one not experienced in so long ... and I sailed ... away ... into a sweetly smothering dream ...

When next the sun arose, I knew my fate. With chisel in hand, I sought the soul within the slate - *[fondling the stone]*... so smooth ... so black and clean ... I cut these lines, my future, into its face. *[reflective pause]* They say these lines will outlast the ages ...

*[reflective pause – then hand to face, eyes closed, a gentle tracing touch]*

They say these lines ....

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**Epilogue**

Years later we met again. I gave her a copy of what I wrote, inspired by her story.  
Anxious days passed. Then I received this note:

‘I’ve always wondered how wordsmiths turn an inspiration into writing.  
Continue writing words and I will continue carving them.  
I hope to see you at the fair in years to come.’