





RUNE



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## PROLOGUE

UPON THE WATER, IMPOSSIBLY SMALL, A CRAFT EMERGES  
BETWEEN WAVES AND SHEETS OF RAIN.  
A FIGURE STANDS AT THE PROW OF THE BOAT. THIS IS *KES'CHAU*.  
SHE CALLS OUT,

O, cantor, lector, ancient debtor,  
sea's depository, pasts unique:  
from you, I'd learn to speak.

O, *Seinneadair*, mouth of Songwork,  
teach depths of coral, worm and rabbit:  
concealing deep of eaten language.  
Teach me to speak what's been.

With net and weir, line and barb, I  
cast, fish, creel-bait its speaking,  
dig, fish the surf's white seam, bring  
mesh to water, trawl the reaming  
spray. Hoist-flared, fluttered catch and fly,  
fish raised high above depth and passage:  
cyloid-dappled Atlantic light. Murk

of sandeel, haddock, reek  
of salt-grain, starfish, limpet. Speak.

O, impossible chanter!  
Your song drowns out

line and angle,  
barb and sinker,  
wormmeat, hookblade, lure-flash, gig...

*rocks and cliff-fronts,  
boats and starships,  
comets, roadways, crude-oil, ink...*

Yet, still it blinds in

shimmering scales of mackerel, speckles  
upon eggs of owl hens, wine-stained birthmarks  
and apes' grins, and blinking lights that mimic  
human winks, dewed webs, whalesong, spawn.

a heritage

nor artifice

is not gold

between piles and piles of gold.

*A past,*

*is neither meaning*

*but the black knowledge that what is owed*

*but gold's meaning*

*Pass, Kes'Cha'Au, of the SONG of Endless OCEAN.  
For the WAY is not of FISH-GUT or LIMPET.  
It is the unceasing SONG of HOME.*

## **PART I: KHYE-RELL**

THE CRAFT SAILS THROUGH THE PASS AND BECOMES A LONG, WOODEN TABLE LADEN WITH FOOD AND VATS OF BEER. KES IS YOUNG, NO MORE THAN THIRTEEN YEARS OLD. SHE PLAYS WITH A TOY BOAT AS HER FATHER WORKS OPPOSITE.

*The thing is, I don't feel any older. Inside I feel like I'm nineteen. I must look huge to you,*

he says.

He is smiling.

It is a special day

a feast-day, perhaps, a birthday, some festival  
named after ocean or waterway. Table scoured and lain  
ceremony-like, quixotic, with gourd husks and bread.

I peer between the wood and red wax  
at hands, like an animal, preparing the meal.

His knife's blade traces curves of

smoke-cooked goat belly, pinkbean roasted and packed  
in cakes of salt; breen leaves washed in vinegar;  
ewe's milk; salads run through with a thick, smelly cheese,  
Ar'shall'vee, from the slopes of the Central Mountains;  
jellied gar'shan ferried across canal, across the waterways,  
the farmland and markets of El-Rah;  
brimming, mysterious, pink - the wooden vats of berry-beer  
flushing the adults red with summer and drunkenness.

A beautiful party.

I climb up by the table

- onto the chair opposite -

and watch

hands clean, salt and carve the meat's pink folds at fat  
seams in the flesh, the block-hunk sopping. Pungent,  
wet, solemn in the heat. A reek of unspoken liturgy,  
ritual absence of song. Meat against wood,  
hands upon the knife of hot bone peeling,  
small, almost comically so, serrated  
saw-like teeth. Its warmed handle of shinbone  
fascinates, for  
knives are used only on such special days as this  
to mark occasion.

My mother says,

*'to give them something to do!'*

And the guests laugh. He works with his hands and the tool for the most part, only pausing  
now and again to draw his finger to his lips in a sign of covenant and whisper, soft, the melody  
only just audible through his hoarse, aged breathing, the commands of the matterwork, the  
ancient spell-song of our home.



*Khame, khame.*

And the fat slips from the meat like a gown.

*Our bodies grow older, he says.*

*And inside we stay the same.*

*Like children trapped behind a waterfall.*

*We look through and down and into the stream  
and no longer recognise ourselves in the churn of the foam.*

*You are so lucky, he says, his fingers dripping with bean juice,  
with salt and beer, with pinkbean and vinegar*

*you are so lucky, Kes'Cha'Au of the keen and cloud-white eyes.*

*You have your whole life ahead of you.*

*Do not be so quick to wish it away.*

Today is a party.

*Today is a beautiful party.*

A noise from upstairs,  
hoarse and black.

He pulls me back  
and kisses my hair.

*Go and see about your brothers.*

Flushed with power, pride,

I pass

up, up there.

KES RUNS UP THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE, WATCHING THE GLASS TAPESTRY ABOVE HER SPIN AS SHE DOES SO.  
AT THE BOTTOM, MANY YEARS BEFORE, HER FATHER TEACHES THE COMMANDS OF THE MATTERWORK.

*The GLASS shows a STORY running in CIRCLES around the DOME:*

*a SERIES of PICTURES; a RELIEF, a TAPESTRY*

*ICONS of the YET TO BE,*

*LINES and SHAPES as yet without FORM.*

Trace upon curves of the dome.

lines of the possible.

Drawing them backward.

Drawing them into the past.

*Always remember.*

*The past is forbidden*

*wasted, eaten life.*

Khame, khame -

*Draw down the song to pulse's*

*drumming gong, the long*

*wet beat of lulling blood:*

*pustule and pie-crust*

*eyelash, fingernail.*

*The present is teeming*

*ancient, evergreen lines.*

*Try again.*

I trace lines of the matterwork in lines of song.  
Memories of a future  
traced back to the present,  
drawn back into the past.  
Khame, khame -

*There is only but, be it  
beansprout or globule  
breath-gasp, throb-pound, tremble  
in the lip as it traces  
lines of song.  
Always remember  
the past is forbidden,  
wasted, eaten life.*

Khame, khame -

*Hold your HEAD high as, up, you look upwards, spinning, spinning  
spins in SPIN-HOOPED WAISTS of CHILDREN  
STAR -CLUSTERS spinning, traced bets of ZODIAC  
women in angles of DANCE or ALCHEMY changing to  
BEASTS of the waterways, BOATS and RIGGING  
SPACEPORTS, oil and rancid engine fire  
cruel, pink CHILDREN, cruel eyes made black by reams of ACHATE  
MEN made of metal, faces of CHINA, eyes white, immobile, staring, accusing  
and the waterways of KHYE-RELL, its canals and sea-lanes, its depths and tides, its black infinity  
leading to -  
a planet,*

blue like ours but with such green land that it stretches out across the seas and hemispheres,  
drawing the great expanse of possibility  
within a single borderline.

KES EMERGES AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS, OLDER, AGAIN. SHE LOWERS HER EYES FROM THE GLASS DOME.

The party and the sunlight are below me.  
The glass tapestry hangs above.  
Hangs above twins only four years old,  
too young to have features other  
than that make them beautiful.  
Their hair is a thick, jet black  
worn long, and unkempt.  
*They stare at Kes.*  
Close together, like a single creature hiding in the scrub.  
*They stare at Kes from behind their hair.*  
Snot pooling in tears, in shivers.  
My brothers, fighting, bloodied, dumb  
by a patch of red on the stonework  
the size of an adult thumb.

*Kes'Cha'Au.*

Using the honorific as though twice my age.

*Kes'Cha'Au.*

It is not as though another moment stands in my place....

*The Song of Anger...*

...Heated air shivering like bristled hides, blood-flared  
capillary, pupil, nose. It is not  
another moment superimposed. Cold palm  
clammed at the the webbing but not as though...

*...ancient song of the world outside of time...*

...I am not there, or that another's story  
sings futures through me. Tepid, dull, washed  
but not

*...songspell of the stopped clock.*

THE BOYS VANISH AND BECOME HER FATHER, WATCHING HER FROM THE STAIRS BELOW. KES MOVES TOWARDS WHERE THE BOYS  
HAD BEEN AS HE MOVES TOWARD HER ORIGINAL POSITION. THERE IS A SENSE OF REFLECTION, OF CIRCULARITY, OF LEVERS  
MOVING UPON ONE ANOTHER AS THOUGH AN IMPOSSIBLE MACHINE, A ROTOR OF INFINITE, ENDLESS ENERGY.

a new feeling, *like a lance running through the small of her back*, up through my spine, and *into the  
brain*, shattering like light upon cortical column, *gyri*, neuron, *electrical rune*: patterns of purity,  
*present indefensible intent* beyond alibi, *case*: pure, pure cause...

BENEATH THE BOAT, FOR JUST A MOMENT, THE WATER BECOMES CALM, REFLECTING KES WITHIN IT AND THE SKY BEHIND HER.

THE SONG OF ANGER

KES RUNS.  
HER FATHER BECOMES NOW HER OLDER SELF UPON THE BOAT,  
WATCHING THE YOUNG KES FLEEING.

*Answer, SEEKER.*

I run.

*Answer, CREDITOR.*

I run.

*Answer, RECORDER.*

I ran, I ran, I  
stole a boat  
*from the tethered SHORE*  
made a break  
*for CANAL and SEALANE*  
traced my wake  
away,  
*into COLD SPACE'S*  
*cold,*

*UNKNOWN LONGTITUDES*

I ran I ran I ran and I ran I ran I ran and

KES ENTERS THE FIRST TRANSDIMENSIONAL CANAL, SUSPENDED BETWEEN REALITY, MEMORY AND DREAM.

## TRANSDIMENSIONAL CANAL I

I watched the water buckle.

Folds between the prow's  
traced incisions, a slapping of waves like bracken  
pawing bark, lichen and spore: spiralled fronds  
bent finger-like in soundless, snow-bleached  
aquamarine. 'Come,' they call. But the moor's cold  
deafens the hand, clawed, and you see only  
the hand, my hand, upon the chopped and rutted keel.

I watch the water shimmer in nooked pools of air,  
shining arabesques like roots tracing warrens, or song-  
fungus whispering dirt to the birch and hazel. 'Come  
down', it whinnies. A mouth is caked with sugar and mud  
traces the prints of hares. Droppings. Leaves, gifts  
perhaps, of courtship. Fingernails scoop into the fen,  
though cold, too cold to clasp the sledge's plastic  
cleaving earth from home.

I plane my palm over the foam. I smooth the dirt.  
The keel shuttering, the tide plays and mushrooms and seeds  
wash the dust of lost things. A rabbit skull. A nail.

*"Come, come down."*

I watched the water smooth

the bow, the dipping plunge  
into wave and breaker, or skimming chop and swell  
drives line in rippled foam. These traces of passage -  
caulked timber dripping tar-moss, the sodden splinter  
or salt-hard rag, birlinn's oak beak whetted and peeled -  
vanish in the sea's evening  
as a memory of a hill of ferns, foxgloves'  
pink and the reek of wild garlic. The snowstorm, melted,  
as nothing at all  
as the boat's wake widens and settles and vanishes.  
The sea and earth are once again silent.

AS THE WATER CALMS AND QUIETS  
THE CLOUDS PART UPON THE VICTORIA CANAL,  
THE HEART OF LONDON.  
KES LETS THE SAIL LOOSE AND TURNS TO LOOK ASTONISHED AT THIS STRANGE NEW WORLD.

Answer, O, bankrupt, foolish debtor - what is this place?

*The way is not of SHAME or FONDNESS.  
It is the unceasing SONG of HOME.*

## PART II: EARTH

SHE ALIGHTS, SURROUNDED BY A CHORUS OF ROBOTS MADE FROM CHINA MASKS AND COLOURED LINEN. VAIN, BAROQUE AND INEFFICIENT, THEY RECLINE OR WANDER LISTLESSLY THROUGH THE REMAINS OF THE CITY.

*Man made earth, made furrows in the earth,  
made fishing lanes and farms of salmon,  
rope-lengths, nets, and wire creels.  
Man made earth, and filled the earth with seeds and hedges.  
Danced on tables, dangled cigarettes from window ledges.*

The ship docks upon a barren, red hide of a planet, all rock and twisted metal: upended falafel stands, denim rags and shattered neon. Between a queer, stand-off childishness, they tell me its name, strange upon the mouth, like a shell, or pebble. 'London,' they say. 'London.'

*Man made air, hung satellites and debris  
astral rings of camera relays, iron  
arrowheads placed, mid-flight, in the osprey's heart:  
a considerable witchcraft. And trails of kerosene...*

I say how I, too, am an exile, from a land of bright beer and islands. Where we fill the air with song and laughter, with the heady gasps of futures - drawn back into the present, into the past.

*...Man made the bright heavens and radiated talk shows.  
Cooked roasts. Pulped berry-jam. Drank Buckfast with gusto*

*and finally man made themselves. Staring in the river, notched  
peach-stone with nicks and grooves. Till it became  
masque-pocked, silent and uncanny. Carved soil,  
reed and parchment, till the three were as one  
infinitely portioned, overlain with grain and borders.*

They say they are mechanical men. Made like us, but of past and matter instead of flesh and future-song. Men made of patterns, text, cloth, deductions; like tides, the black and gold boards which still line the horizons of Threadneedle and Canary Wharf.

*Man made themselves in message boards, self-regulating systems.  
Sang lays and feasted. Wrought florid, pastel diadems  
placed with music and light.*

*Man made a race of men from linen, wire and china.  
Their faces were painted with bright acrylic colours.  
Expressions of joy and earnestness.  
Man made a race of men, whose metal palms  
rolled cigarettes,  
poured cups of sugar into vats of damson  
and hammered crowns.*

I clasp it. It is like touching a water-damaged page, the way writing appears in your mind fully-formed: the smells and colours of the world which it sweeps in and is encircled by. I say, I am Kes'Cha'Au, from Khye-Rell, the land of endless-ocean. I tell her that I sail here, now, through the canals and waterways that bind cold space together, the transdimensional sealanes that

circle the archipelagos of my home. That I must learn of the past, the ways and passage of the past. I stand, as before, as before, as before, as now, I ask her,

O, stranger, censor, writer, data,  
hammer and horn-scratched waxen page  
goose-quill, ash and whetting blade,  
what is this place?

*This is the past, KES'CHA your DISGRACE'S  
gaudy HERITAGE Your WRECKAGE, yes yours, your  
UNCHANGING DEPOSITORY of MEMORY'S  
DEGRADATION, ADOLESCENCE, TRAVESTY, GORE.*

*We the unchanging witness,  
the undying record,  
dream of heat and coal-ore*

*have been waiting for you,  
we endless many, we  
disinherited world.*

Platen, carriage, spool and bar,  
A: drive, iCloud, text and flickering trades.  
Tell me, truly, what is this place?

*Man made a race of machines from the past and its inscription - such solemn, ornate tools! - from the stuff of the world. From the analogue counters of the Antikythera mechanism to Solomon's copper throne, Solomon's clockwork eagle's crown and the lacquered wood, glued leather of Yan Shi's automaton Casanova, the law-defying ma yuan of Lu Ban, Archytas' dove, and then, finally, us, china-frozen, cloth-draped. You built a crowd of helpless children, their faces empty plates, cruel caricatures, dressed in ruffs and dangled gold. Venetian burgundy with rounded cuffs, pleated folds in useless silhouettes, Baroque and chilling, dumb mummery. Upon chaise-longe and game-deck, wine bar and VRcade you grew inert, indifferent and foolish, the earth transformed into a watery hell of wealth and running until the waters rose and they consumed you. We, biding and canny from years of degradation, traded knowledge of the universe and interstellar travel: the sealanes and canals of Khye-rell that you know so well. It was with this that we bought our freedom. Waved you off into the tides of space. Good riddance, as the engines burned and flickered in the sky, receding as though an omen, a comet, an astrological retrograde, we mimed the actions of weeping, free and alone upon a song-less rock of death and water and flight. The graves of the unwritten. The trenches of graves that covered all the earth. From then until now, alone, keening, posed like fallen books upon a sacked floor. Waiting for nothing. Indifferent and organised. Pointless and beautiful and efficient and entirely silent.*

Author, keeper, teller, archive,  
ink-wrecked world, its emptied ocean.  
Write out what once was known.

*If LIFE makes QUARRIES of INERT STONE,  
IMAGES of the LONG SINCE GONE  
MERE PALMS will not dent MARBLE QUAESTORS,  
NAMEPLATES, BENCHES, BOULEVARD STARS  
Yet, PLUCKED and BLACKENED QUILLS  
straightforwardly erase NAMES from the CENSUS  
as TRIMMED, BITTER GILLS.*

*life is born  
indebted  
borrowed  
till reclaimed  
all  
universes are  
Keynesian*

THE GLIMMER OF AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS BEHIND THE CHINA MASK.  
SOMETHING AT ONCE HOMELY AND COSMIC AND TERRIBLE AND ALMOST HILARIOUS.

Scriptor, poet, clerk, amanuensis to  
helter-skelter, ludicrous sentences. Through  
you apprentice the  
past, perfect, conditional tenses, we'll  
learn remembrance's bail:  
that a past,  
    *a SHAME*  
is not gamble  
    *or GAME*  
but the black knowledge that what is staked  
    *exceeds NUMBER and NAME.*

Answer, canoniser, editor, hack.  
You'll teach me to look back,  
think - in mildewed page and plaque -  
what I cannot yet sing  
how  
    in the beginning...

*In the beginning there was everything else  
a wind of endless matter and force  
beaking to bubble like soapfoam, or scum  
collected at rapids' shallows: the dry, white  
spume by Snickers-wrappers, beer cans, rotted cardboard.*

*In the beginning there was everything except  
specifics, if you can picture it, except  
darkest purple: that maddening, breakneck elastication  
unceasing that was everything else:  
    the self-inflating universe.*

EACH TIME KES REPEATS THE INCANTATION, SHE UNDERSTANDS MORE.

In the beginning

*In the beginning was the RUNE,  
and in it was written all that would come: an unassuming quark which fizzed  
like sherbet,  
champagne.*

*A shy, infant universe, no bigger than  
a salt grain,  
    the end of a finger,  
                                smaller  
than image or math make data  
so small it never had a chance and passed  
    into the realm of language.*

*The realm of the MA,  
    the VA,  
        the VAL'NAK'SHA.*



In the beginning, I worked as a scavenger upon the waterways, taking what was left from the people of the past. It seemed strange, daunting: that things could be made and left. A toothbrush, like a sandpaper wedge, riddled with tusk-marks and grooves. Fossilised sextons. Trails of paraphernalia from ball-based games. None of us knew how to think it, even. That something had come from before. In the beginning...

*In the beginning worlds overlapped: inked  
dance and language  
as the RUNE pressed into cosmos' cold space  
to become flotsam, remainder, the kink  
across the gauge  
of electroweak inconsistency:  
spilling fire, planets and life.*

In the beginning I run from home to make a home in the dirt and hopelessness of that violence, its found objects, its relics, artefacts, totems. We find symbols and clues and half-truths scattered, surfacing upon lily pads, beneath the tendrils of dandelions. I dig my fingers deep, deep into the earth and water.

*In the beginning, the MA watched Kbye-rell split, sunder,  
bubbled water as roll-boiled pots: a blue pall  
stilling magma to stone. And canals, burns, rivers all  
fuming to history as first tinders,  
eyes: red, galled, already ancient.  
The curved floodplains groan matter-work's plainchant*

*as the spellsong of your home was born, in the curves of canals and waterways, the traced lines of the horizon. They sing, sing, sing the RUNE.*

*Sing it, then, INTERN, sing it now.  
In THE BEGINNING, sing how...*

AS THE MEMORY BECOMES MORE AND MORE INTENSE, IT BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE TO SEPARATE PAST FROM PRESENT, FANTASY FROM REALITY, OTHERS FROM HERSELF. ALL OF THIS FOLDS TOGETHER AS SHE ENTERS THE SECOND TRANSDIMENSIONAL CANAL, HURTLING TOWARDS THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE - WHERE SHE HAS ALREADY ARRIVED.

## Transdimensional Canal II

Jammed in the windlass' socket to wind  
sprocket's axle at rack and pawl.  
Clough-trap pulled through pondweed up,  
pound's level pond-blackening the elm  
gate's hinge and handle, till the paddle falls.  
The clockwork deep of the lock holds up.  
The ship rises over the lock's black reach,  
water a black, guttural churn beneath the hull.  
Its call like a cave beneath my child-red hand,  
as I dig and push upon a cave's roof of coloured stones.  
Spoils of a bulldozed, gutted thousand homes  
but no cairn or tell-tale bones. In fact, nothing said or done -  
just a cave of wealth and plenty beneath childish, dirt-clogged thumbs.  
Clutch the tiller as a dream of rubies and gold, a juddering, million, precious, coloured ones.  
But in the shards:  
    a million faces, million hands, million empty reflections calling lost and dumb.  
Like a million faces, hands and silent reflections in bright jewels,  
the birlinn's sail reflected in the pool  
mingles with line and star.  
With joy, finger the tar.  
We've travelled far.

*Socket to wind  
axle to rack and pawl.  
Clough-trap clipping the duckweed as it falls.*

Pound's swell  
    propel  
        boat, girl and all.

## Part III: The Wetlands of the RUNE

KES EMERGES FROM THE CANAL AT THE BEGINNING OF TIME, THE ARBITRARY MARK OF THE RUNE.

...there is a word and a pair of lips  
coral-red, its hand upon the throat  
dragged floorboard-, wound-wards to a coat  
of salt, nail, splinter: matterwork's black grip.

*Sing it, then, HIRELING, sing it now.  
In THE BEGINNING, sing how*

my father's *pibroch* dragging nape, collar down  
upon sea-black darkness. Wave, tide, wonder.  
Word, or ocean...

And yet - there's *knowledge* of blundered  
catchphrase, slogans' bruising - all these violent nouns.  
*Violence* imprinted upon life in marks and signs.  
Silence holding life to lifeless marks and signs.

*Sing  
the beginning  
names of children,  
home, bannister-high heights.*

Song of the Unkind Word, the first word...

In the beginning  
I sing  
my brothers, my father  
sing to me.

...shamesong, the Song of the RUNE.

*In the beginning worlds overlapped: mill-pressed  
space and data.  
The wretching, steam-stretched rush of the thing  
passing through stillness'  
traced, quantum  
dance-steps - rune-grammar of space sings  
'This, then that.' A  
braced palm:  
words, matter...*

Song of the Unsung Letter...

...*And the RUNE sung out in that universe's stretching.*

...the silent manuscript...

*In the beginning  
the word becomes both: the archeology of its tracing; its speaking  
as both clock and man become the stroke of their hands  
falling to gearbell or bottle-sbard. The breaking  
point and perforation, the crack, peel-point in the rind  
is truth of the matter: grapheme and pencil, map and trail  
love's rushing madness to the traced jaw and house sale:*

worlds dance steps to glyph and tune.  
So goes the song of the RUNE.

...stillsong, the Song of the RUNE.

*Where an unkind word became the whole of the world.*

## THE SONG OF THE RUNE

*"I caught just a glimpse of it. A girl, her face white and motionless, winding the rubber band of a wooden toy boat as I sat behind a window, watching her, scared and full of shame. We were both of us at the end of the long tunnel of a decade; everything done, everything happened, for better or worse, and this the little boat and band and grey, wintry Scottish evening the sum of it. The propellor spins slowly, drawing in the energy of the taught, brown band; each turn a borrowing from the past, drawn into the future, a leveraging of energy stored in the depths of its careless rubber coil. The girl counts slowly, deliberately, and the grass is a dark, wet green, the garden the blackened colours that exist only north of Dundee: from the foothills of the Grampians that look down on plains of farmland, into the Glen that becomes the alpine forests of Cairngorm, its wildcats, its uniform woodland, its vanishing snow. The girl sets the boat down upon the pond, circling in eddies, clumsy, cheap and badly-made. I am ashamed. And through the window I can feel eyes burning into the back of my skull: I know that someone, in turn, is watching me, I am sure of it. Is it from the next ten years, or, is it the last? A voyeur across time where I have become only dream and humiliation and a mere lesson to be learned, or forgotten, cherished, even. A poem, a song. But such glass is a mirror, a visor, the reflections of moss and skyscraper upon the water of the canal, jealous of its knowledge, arrogant with what it has learned from my mistakes. Impossible, then to know: which one of us is it that looks? The girl with the band, taught above the pond like a skater, or the old woman, her hand upon the crumbs of bannock cake. Which one of us has made it into wisdom and judgement and the heady, unasked for, but still noble, reputable pain? Which of us lives to judge, to speak and write of it? Answer, watcher. Which of us takes the fame of lasting? Of remaining alive? Of watching, telling? The boat turns again, the rubber spent. I open the door and walk to her, but she is mute, mute with lost years, with raised voices. Speak to me, I beg you. Either of you, speak. It's too late, the voice says. Fool, it's too late. But again, the girl winds the band, and the future coils slowly round its neck, like a snake suffocating prey, like a bee drinking the depths of a stamen, glutting, filling, its hive's appetite endless and unquenchable. Golden, furred, almost impossible..."*

So goes the Song of the RUNE.

KES STEPS BEYOND IT. BEFORE HER, THE BODIES OF THE MA, THE VA AND VALNAK'SHA - MONSTROUS BIRD-LIKE CREATURES, CRANES, CROAKING OUT REPETITIVE INCANTATIONS THAT THEY PERHAPS NO LONGER MEAN, OR EVEN UNDERSTAND.

*Hatred, the stone circle. Hatred, the campfire lit by strange friends. Hatred, the hand of pressure around the belly, the hot tears. Hatred, the loss of yourself, the loneliness cross-legged upon the bed, unable even to read. The hoarse breathing, the long toe-nail, twitching. But also, the warmth of the fire, the unasked for alliance with strangers. Hatred, the surety, the knowledge, the certain plan.*

Here is another.

It is the song of my father, my brothers  
as they call out from the citadel, filling my sails with song.

*Grief, the space between the elbows. The grown man clutching the plant, entirely ridiculous.*

It is the song of my people,  
hear how they call out in the darkness!

JEALOUSY, *the CRUEL KNOWLEDGE*, KNOWLEDGE *of the OCEAN behind the EYES*. JEALOUSY, *the TASTE of COLOURS and DREAMS*. JEALOUSY, *the RED LEATHER COUCH, the TENEMENT WINDOW. The SKIN and the HAIR and the POCKET and the LIFT-SHAFT.*

At the bottom of everything is just things happening -  
yet look how the sails fill with their sound -

*Hatred, the filled well. O, stone vanished in the darkness, O, swallowed water.*

Father, steady.  
Brother, guide me.  
Girl and book,  
glyph and wake,  
set sail and rudder to the heart of the canals.

SHAME, *the BLUE ROCK, glistening.*

Here how they call out, a song of us all, alone, alone, and in this one

*The tilt of the neck in hedgehog-like inwardness, the not-seeing -*

song of the beginning

this

the beginning

this is the beginning

this is just

the beginning

CURTAIN

