

My Daughter

by [Michael Shindler](#) (May 2019)



Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon, Caspar David Friedrich, 1824

'My daughter, my only daughter,
What a strange crown you wear
Here on this lonesome riverbank
In the cold morning air.
The sky is white, the field is gray,
And the wild tree is bare.'

'I see a ring tied in your locks
Of strange ore and strange make.
I fear it will never come loose
Nor bend nor melt nor break.
And your hands, they seem damp and pale,
And now they seem to shake.'

My father, my only father,
By waters where fates float,
I was alone bathing and saw
A boy in a black boat:
His eyes were white, his face was gray,
And a noose rung his throat.

With a trembling and outstretched hand,
All wet and all unclad,
I gave to this boy a lily,
For it was all I had,
And he gave me a simple song,
Long and loving and sad.

I climbed up into his black boat
And we sailed through the night,
And for many an hour we gave
New names to every light
That holds up the shivering veil
That hangs at heaven's height.

And then he made for me a crown
More fine than words could tell,
Fit for a love, fit for a queen,
And made of pearl and shell.
He placed it upon me and said,
"Together shall we dwell."

After the hours had come and passed,
The boat and wind aligned,
And we came upon his palace
And there we danced and dined
And then he gave me this strange ring
To adorn and to bind.

And while he held me in his arms

I saw past him standing
Hundreds and hundreds of pale girls,
Each with a crown and ring,
And cold eyes as white as the sky,
But mouths that could not sing.

With pale hands, they would beckon me
As the moon does the tide.
My father, my only father,
I wept, I shook, I cried,
But my boy led me by the hand
And I became his bride.

Now whenever the tide comes in,
I shall this strange crown wear,
Beyond this lonesome riverbank
And the cold morning air,
As long as this, our sky, is white
And the wild tree is bare.

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