The Exiled Roman Poet Ovid Contemplates the First Winter Storm in Tomis on the Black Sea

I know that after six more months of winds howling like wolves celebrating a kill on blood-pooled snow, I will loathe, fear these blizzards flung down in huge fistfuls by northern demons who laugh when men freeze.

But, tonight—if it is night, the sun gobbled by the great white bear of snow—I feel only the peace of a rich man counting his hoard: Luka stitching some essential garment. Magir asleep, after watching the storm.

We laughed over the many beasts I formed with my fingers on the wall, the hearth’s flames making silhouettes: healthier hauntings than the Roman revels my wife and I would attend in nude, delirious lust.

But thinking of those nights, I feel every fang-mark of wind and snow, and the coming raids of vicious Scythians, each winter no different, until the ice breaks: natives claiming the bears that sleep beneath the river have awoke, to drag laggard riders down.

Rome, suddenly I miss your climate, mild as a mother’s loving good-night embrace. Luka glances from her sewing, and knows without a word said how it is with me. She lays down her thread and skins, and holds me as if I were Magir, flung from nightmares.

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