

# Archer

*by* Beate Sigriddaughter

She has always wanted to belong. Now  
it looks like she does. Dad offers  
a sip of his beer. She giggles, shakes  
her head. Heartthrob Rogelio nods,  
his dark eyes gleam with admiration. First  
time he looks at her like that. Nobody  
says the dread words, "for a girl."  
The men offer to skin and gut  
the deer. She ponders this, accepts.  
She still feels the sinew of the bow,  
her strong and steady arms, the whistle  
and velocity of death. The wounded eyes  
film over, lifeless, without accusation.  
"Well done," someone says. She wants  
to ask back: "Have you ever looked  
into the eyes of a deer?" Their calm  
and dark acceptance, shy round  
innocence with just a hint of question.  
And the bold nose. But no words come.  
She is in a different league now.  
Tomorrow she will be sixteen.  
They promise her first taste  
of the meat. She feels empty, silenced,  
betrayed. No one explained triumph  
would feel like this. She remembers  
wide surprise in eyes so black that  
they could make you weep. The finches  
in the juniper have lost their charm.

