

## Väinämöinen

I know the origins of iron; I remember how we first begat steel.

Air was its mother, fire its brother.

Iron itself was not born - first, Ukko, heavenly god did this -

He rubbed his hands together and from that three maidens were born,  
nature spirits to be the mothers of metal.

The maidens walked through the lands, and as they walked they gave forth  
milk. Their milk spilt onto the ground, onto the gentle waters.

The eldest maiden spilled a black milk. The middle, she spilled white. The  
third and youngest spilled milk of deepest red.

From the black milk iron was born. From the white came steel. And the red  
begat iron ore.

After a time Iron wanted to meet its brother, to make the acquaintance of  
fire. But the fire was miserable and sought to hurt its brother, and so Iron  
hid. It splashed into a spring, hid itself in a bog. It stretched out under the  
reeds and waited, hid for a year, and two, and again a third.

The smith Ilmarinen had set up his forge, and was seeking some iron with  
which to make a sword. He walked along the edge of the pond, and saw  
the tracks of a wolf, and also the tracks of a bear. Within the prints he saw  
a touch of red, the rusty edge of the hidden iron, revealed by the step of the  
wolf, the tread of the bear.

He rescued the iron from its watery grave, but the iron was frightened. "Do  
not fear!" Ilmarinen told the lump. "Fire will not hurt you, once it sees that  
you are his brother. When you meet the fire, it will instead make you  
beautiful, it will make you magnificent, it will help you become the grandest  
sword of men.

And so Ilmarinen took the iron and thrust it into the fire. He pumped his  
bellows and blew on the flames. The steel turned red and then white and  
then almost to liquid gold. The smith put it to anvil and fashioned a sword,  
the first sword to be made from the first iron in the world.