

In Word and Thread

A letter to

*Martha's baby*



MICCA

*Dear little child,*

We do not know your name.

We do not even know whether you were a girl or a boy. History tells us that your mother was Martha van Wetteren, that she was pregnant when she was sentenced to death, and that the execution of her sentence was postponed until you were born. After that, your trace disappears.

Your mother was burned alive on 23 October 1684. She was thirty-eight years old.

The sources are silent about you.

And perhaps that is what touches me most. That your existence becomes visible only because it delayed your mother's death for a few months. As if you appear briefly in history, even before you are born, and then disappear again.

I wonder who held you after you were born.

Whether Martha herself was still allowed to do so. Whether she was able to feed you, knew your scent, held you close against her. Whether she knew who would care for you when she was gone. Perhaps there was family. Perhaps someone took you in. Perhaps you lived and grew up without anyone ever writing down who your mother was.

We do not know.

That is why I do not want to fill in your story either.

I cannot give you a name that does not appear in the sources. I cannot tell you how your life unfolded or who you became. But I can acknowledge that you were here.

For you, I knitted a blanket.

I chose two colours, soft rose and sage green. Not because I know who you were, but precisely because I do not. The threads travel together throughout the entire blanket. Neither ever disappears completely. What is background on one side becomes the motif on the other. Double knitting creates two sides that are inseparably connected.

That felt fitting for you and Martha.

I knitted bindrunes for courage, strength and love into the blanket. Not because your mother used these symbols. There is no historical evidence for that. They are my own addition, almost three wishes that I place in the wool centuries later.

Courage, for the life that lay ahead of you.

Strength, for whatever you may have had to carry.

And love, because I hope that after your mother's death there was someone who gave you that.

I originally made this blanket for a baby. Something soft to wrap around a small body and keep it warm. But there was no baby around me who needed it. So it stayed with me. During my many hours of knitting, it now often lies over my feet.

I actually find that beautiful.

It has not become an object carefully put away because it belongs to a sorrowful story. It is used. It gives warmth. While I work stitch by stitch on new designs and once again bring names out of old trial records, your blanket lies with me.

I cannot give you back your name.

But between the threads of Martha's story, your small existence no longer has to remain entirely silent.

You were here.

And that is why this blanket is for you.