

## *In Word and Thread*

**Dear Anne Pedersdotter,**

Long before you were accused of being a witch, there were patterns intended to protect in everyday life. This sweater departs from that older layer: the *lusekofte*, a garment that for generations in Norway offered warmth and protection.

The dark base and the repeating motif build on that tradition. Stitch by stitch, the same sign returns, as was customary in historical *lusekofter*. In folk culture, such patterns were often seen as protective: a magical defense against what threatens from outside. In this sweater, the repeating motif takes the form of a bindrune, a symbol of love. Love—not only as emotion, but as force: that which sustains and endures when social protection falls away.

You lived in Bergen in the second half of the sixteenth century, a city under Danish rule where religious orthodoxy and urban power were closely intertwined. Bergen was learned, international, and tense. Knowledge circulated there, but so did suspicion. For a long time, you stood at the center of that life. As the wife of Absalon Pederssøn Beyer, you belonged to an intellectual elite. Your household was a place of conversation, scholarship, and influence.

After your husband's death in 1575, your position changed drastically. You remained visible, independent, and present in a society that expected widows to withdraw. In the years that followed, old conflicts, rumors, and personal enmities became entangled. In a culture where witchcraft was considered a real and punishable crime, such tensions could be channeled into legal prosecution.

In 1590, you were accused of witchcraft. The charges against you were broad and cumulative, as was common in witch trials: harmful influence, forbidden knowledge, dealings with demonic forces. This was not about evidence in the modern sense, but about a coherent suspicion. You were arrested, released, and prosecuted again. That uncertainty was not accidental, but part of a system designed to increase pressure until collapse.

Eventually, torture was authorized. What you then declared was recorded as confession, despite the conditions under which those words were produced. On that basis, you were found guilty. The sentence was final. In 1590, you were publicly burned in Bergen. The punishment served not only a legal but also a symbolic function: it was meant to restore order by making fear visible.

At the center of this sweater appears an image that for centuries has been used against women: the flying witch. Also against you. The flying witch represented a woman who had left her place, who withdrew from social and religious control.

Along the edges of the sweater run red hearts. In the *lusekofte*, red marks the boundary between inside and outside. It protects what is worn. Here, it frames your story. Red stands for blood, but also for connection and loyalty. For life that could not be entirely erased.

What this sweater does, Anne, is place you back into a human lineage. Not as a witch, not as a warning, but as a woman within a history of knowledge, loss, and persecution. Wool is fragile, yet enduring. It is worn, repaired, passed on.

Your name was once fixed in a sentence. This sweater gives your name another place—close to the skin, carried in love, held in thread.

**With reverence,**  
Micca

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## Historical Context – Anne Pedersdotter

Anne Pedersdotter was executed in Bergen in 1590 following a witch trial. She is the most well-known victim of the Norwegian witch persecutions.

She was the widow of Absalon Pederssøn Beyer (1528–1575), a priest, humanist, and chronicler. After his death, she lost her social protection. In a context of religious orthodoxy, personal conflicts, and legal space for prosecution, she was accused of witchcraft. In late sixteenth-century Norway (then part of the Danish-Norwegian realm), witchcraft was regarded as a serious crime against both God and society. Trials were based on suspicion, testimonies, and confessions, with torture legally permitted.

The trial of Anne Pedersdotter unfolded in multiple phases of arrest and release. Ultimately, she was subjected to torture; the statements she made were used as confession. On that basis, she was found guilty. In 1590, she was publicly executed by burning. Her case is well documented and stands as an important example of how witch persecutions functioned in early modern Scandinavia.

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## The Image of the Flying Witch

The image of the witch flying through the air on a broom emerged in Europe during the late Middle Ages and early modern period. It is not a timeless folk motif, but a composite image in which everyday symbolism, ritual practices, and ecclesiastical imagery converged.

In the Middle Ages, the broom was a common household object and strongly associated with women's work. Precisely this everyday nature gave the object symbolic weight. In a society where female care, knowledge, and independence were often viewed with suspicion, a familiar tool could be transformed into a sign of supposedly misused power.

In addition, in various parts of Europe there existed folk customs in which brooms played a role in fertility and seasonal rituals. Jumping with or “riding” brooms during festivities was seen as a way to promote growth and fertility. These practices contributed to the idea of movement above the earth and formed a cultural background for later representations of magical flight.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, legal and demonological sources mention so-called witch's ointments, composed of plants with hallucinogenic properties, such as henbane and thorn apple (datura). These substances could be absorbed through the skin and induce trance-

like experiences. The experience of “flying” was likely an inner sensation, which in trials and imagery was interpreted literally.

During the witch persecutions, this image was deliberately used by both ecclesiastical and secular authorities. In woodcuts and pamphlets, the flying witch became a recognizable symbol of deviance, guilt, and diabolical alliance. In this way, a complex combination of ritual, misunderstanding, and propaganda was fixed into a single powerful stereotype.

In this sweater, the flying witch reappears, but within a different layer of meaning. Here, she does not fly as a sign of guilt, but as a reminder of how imagery operates—and how it can be reversed. What was once used to condemn women is here preserved in wool: visible, tangible, and stripped of its condemning power.