

The Water Is Wide

(a.k.a. "O Waly, Waly" & "There Is A Ship")

Words & Music:
Traditional English or Scottish

The November 2007 issue of Acoustic Guitar has a nice arrangement of this. This tune dates from the 1600s as "O Waly, Waly" and is either English or Scottish in origin. Modern versions have also been entitled "There Is A Ship" instead of "The Water Is Wide".

D A4 D A4

 D G D D G D
The water is wide--- I cannot cross over.
 D D/C# Bm G Em A
And neither have----- I wings to fly.
A A/G F#m Bm D7 D7sus D7 Bm G6
Build me-- a-- boat----- that can car-----ry two.
 F#m G A A7 D G D
And both shall row----- My love and I.

There is a ship and she sails the sea.
She's loaded deep as deep can be.
But not so deep as the love I'm in.
I know not how to sink or swim.

I lean'd my back up against some oak,
Thinking that he was a trusty tree.
But first he bended and then he broke,
And so did my false love to me.

Oh love is handsome and love is fine.
The sweetest flower when first it's new. [*alt. And love's a jewel, when it is new*]
But love grows old and waxes cold. [*alt. But when it's old, it groweth cold*]
And fades away like summer dew. [*alt. "...like morning dew."*]

INSTRUMENTAL HALF-VERSE:

Build me a boat that can carry two.
And both shall row -- my love and I.
And both shall row -- my love and I.

O, Waly, Waly, Gin Love Be Bonny

(Original 17th Century Lyrics - from Wikipedia)

O Waly, waly, (a lament - "woe is me") up the bank,
And waly, waly, doun the brae (hill),
And waly, waly, yon burn-side (riverside),
Where I and my Love went to gae (go)!
I lean'd my back unto an aik (oak),
I thocht it was a trustie tree;
But first it bow'd and syne (soon) it brak (broke)-
Sae my true love did lichtlie (lightly) me.

O waly, waly, gin love be bonnie (beautiful),
A little time while it is new!
But when 'tis auld (old) it waxeth cauld (cold),
And fades awa' like morning dew.
O wherefore should I busk my heid (adorn my head),
Or wherefore should I kame (comb) my hair?
For my true Love has me forsook,
And says he'll never lo'e me mair (more).

Now Arthur's Seat
Sall (shall) be my bed (burial place),
The sheets sall ne'er be 'filed by me;
Saint Anton's well sall be my drink;
Since my true Love has forsaken me.
Marti'mas wind, when wilt thou blaw (blow),
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?
O gentle Death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am wearie.

'Tis not the frost, that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's (snow) inclemencie,
'Tis not sic cauld (such cold) that makes me cry;
But my Love's heart grown cauld to me.
When we cam in by Glasgow toun,
We were a comely sicht (sight) to see;
My Love was clad in the black velvèt,
And I mysel in cramasie (crimson).

But had I wist (known), before I kist (a coffin = died),
That love had been sae ill to win,
I had lock'd my heart in a case o' gowd (gold),
And pinn'd it wi' a siller (silver) pin.
And O! if my young babe were born, :
And set upon the nurse's knee;
And I mysel were dead and gane,
And the green grass growing over me!