

The White Fisher 2

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"It is a month and it is nae mair,
My dear, since I married thee,
And there is a baby atween your twa sides,
And I'm sure an' it's nae tee me, dear love,
An' I'm sure an' it's nae tee me."

"'Tis a month an' 'tis nae mair,
My dear, since you married me,
An' there is a baby atween my sides,
And I'm sure an' it's nae tee thee, dear love,
An' I'm sure an' it's nae tee thee."

"O is't till a laird? or is't till a lord?
Or ane o' high degree?
Or is't tee ane o your father's merry men?
I'm sure you may tell me, dear love,
I'm sure an' you may tell me."

"It's nae till a laird, it's nae till a lord,
Nor ane o' high degree,
Bet it's tae my father's kitchie boy;
I'm sure I willna lee.

It wis my father's kitchie boy
Atween the kitchie an' the ha';
He laid his han' on my shoulder,
An' he caused me bak to fa'."

"Gang tee your boouer, my lily floouer,
Till a' your months are gane,
An' sometimes you'll read upon a book,
An' sometimes sew your seam, dear love,
An' sometimes sew your seam.

An' I'll rank oot a bonnie boat
An' sail; upon the main,
An' be it weet or be it dry,
That nicht I will be hame, dear love." (1)

It fell ance upon a day
In travailin she fell by,
An' her ain gweed lord in anither room

He heard her thus ti cry:

"Had my young son been tee my ain gweed lord,
He wid hae eased my moan;
Had my young son been tee my ain gweed lord,
He wid hae come an' gone."

It's up he rase an' in he gaes,
It wis tae ease her moan;
Up he rase an' in he gaes
An' he saa his bonnie young son.

"Ye'll tak my young son in your airms
An' hae him far fae me;
Ye'll tak my young son in your airms
An' droon him i' the sea."

He's taen up his bonnie young son
An' clasped him tae his breist,
An' he's awa tee his mither's booer,
Faar she his laid tee rest.

"Ye'll open your door tee me, mither;
Ye'll rise an' lat me in,
For the dew fa's on my yellow hair,
An' it's weetin my bonnie young son."

"I taul ye afore, my son, Willie,
Fan ye gaed there ti woo,
That wisna a leal maiden,
An' I taul it unto you."

"But mither, ye ken I had anither sweetheart
Fan I wis ayont the sea,
An' this is ane o her love tokens
That she's sent hame tee me."

"If that be true, my son Willie,
As I trust weel it be,
There's be nae mair ill deen tee your young son
Tha ever wis deen tee thee."

"Fan my lady comes here", he says,
"As aft she comes ti dine,
Ye'll aye be merry wi my bonnie young son,
But be sure ye dinna ca' him mine."

Up he rase an' awa he gaes,
As fast as he could gang,

An' fan he cam till his lady's boover,
He heard her makin her mane.

"My bonnie young son's tee the white fishin,
An' he's ower young for the sea,
An' lang, lang will I think for fish
Ere he fesh hame tee me.

"My bonnie young son's tee the white fishin,
An' he's ower young for the main,
An' lang, lang will I think for fish
Ere he fesh ony hame."

"Gang tee your bed, my dear," he says,
"Gang tee your bed," says he.
"Gang tee your bed, my dear," he says
"An' a drink I'll mak tee thee."

"I winna gang tee my bed," she says,
"An' I winna tak fae thee,
For them that wid a droont my bonnie young son,
Wid surely poison me."

"O haud your tongue, my dear," he said;
"Say nae mair ill tee me;
There'll be nae mair ill done tee your young son
Than ever wis deen tae me.

"An' fan ye gang tee my mither's boover
As aft ye gang ti dine,
Ye'll aye be merry wi your bonnie young son,
But be sure ye dinna ca' him thine."

(1) This verse may originally have had 5 lines as in verses 1-3 and 6.
leal: loyal, faithful, true.

(As sung by Bell Duncan of Lambhill, Aberdeenshire, and recorded from her by James M. Carpenter around 1920)

Another spin-off from the Search for Missing Tunes. The White Fisher on the DT is the version collected by Gavin Greig from Bell Robertson, none of whose song-texts had recorded tunes (she didn't sing). At the time Bronson published his Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads, none of the three texts available to him had tunes associated with them; there is one extant example, however, which Bronson was aware of but did not have access to: the version collected by James M. Carpenter from Bell Duncan of Lambhill in the parish of Inch, Aberdeenshire, in the 1920s. Carpenter's collection was purchased by the American Library of Congress in 1972. The White Fisher was finally published in The Folk Music

Journal vol.7 no.4 (1998) as part of an article by Julia C. Bishop, The Tunes of the English and Scottish Ballads in the James Madison Carpenter Collection.

Bell Duncan was 82 when she sang this song to Carpenter, and had learned it from her mother some 65-70 years earlier, which would date it back to 1860-65. He recorded her singing it twice; the first verse above is from his second transcription, the rest from the first; this so that the syllables fit more comfortably with the music, which is taken from the second transcription; as published in the Folk Song Journal, only the music given for version 2 verse 3 illustrates the way Bell Duncan modified the melody to accommodate the occasional 5th.

Child #264

MD

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