

# Bain Si

Original and Translation by Mary Olivia Harris

A stóirín,

oh how you've grown!

You cannot know my child how I have loved you.

I held you in my arms when you were but a wisp of life.

Do you remember when we visited the coast?

The year it rained every day,

and then one night,

when the clouds broke only for an hour,

you took my hand and we walked along the shore.

Just you and me in muggy darkness, bare feet squishing into

sand, as fireflies swarmed and danced around our heads,

and you dropped away, and ran palms cupped to catch them.

And you laughed.

That laugh that brought me through so many sorrows.

I have heard the hollow wail, of the woman of the barrow.

My time has come to contemplate the gun.

Do not weep sweet child. Do not sing caoineadh.

I have seen the face of death, not withered hag

but fairest maiden's love.

With a mother's tenderness she will kiss my brow

and wash my clothing in the sea and take my hand

she and I together will swim amongst

the blue abundance.

Do not cry my love.

For me this is the end but you'll go on.

But please, promise me this.

When you hear the maiden cry you'll come,

Not with fear or trepidation.

But come to me my cailín bán, and we shall walk

hand in hand

amongst the hills of splendor.

Key:

\*A stoirín (ah-STOR-een) "Oh little love"

\*caoidneadh (kwee-neh) "lament"

\* cailín bán (COLL-een bawn) "Fair-Haired Girl"