The Lure of the Fairy Hill

Gilbhinn

Scotland (Kennedy-Fraser)

Arranged by Susan Zevenbergen

Mixolydian Mode

F E♭ F E♭ F E♭ F

Far I see the fairy hill, Yon

5 F F E♭ F

hill where holly and red rowans grow,

9 F E♭ F E♭ F E♭ F

Aye, I see yon fairy hill, My

13 F F E♭ F

lover leaning there below.

Faster Refrain (each time)

17 F Dm Dm Dm Dm Dm F

Love to Gil-li-van hoon-dree ho ro hoon-dree ho,

24 F Gm F F

Love that took my sleep off me,

29 F Dm Dm Dm Dm Dm

Love to Gil-li-van hoon-dree ho ro hoon-dree

34 F F E♭ F E♭ F

ho! Far I see yon hill.

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The Lure of the Fairy Hill (Gilbhinn)

In this sad song, collected and published in *Songs of the Hebrides* (1909), by Margery Kennedy-Fraser, is sung by a woman whose family has murdered her *leannan sith*, the fairy lover that has given her sleepless nights and magical powers. Here is how Kennedy-Fraser tells the story:

Long long ago, in Isla, two sisters were wont to go nut-gathering in the hazel woods, the elder having always the luck of the nuts, the younger having never even her own share. “Tell me sister, whence thy luck?” asked the younger. “Tell thee I will,” was the answer, “If thou wilt swear that sooner from thy knee than from thy mouth will the secret slip out!” And she told how a *leannan sith*, her own fairy lover, Gilbhan, from the fairy camp, a lone rock far out on the white sands, had given her the luck. And the sister, forgetful of her oath, betrayed the secret to their father and their three brothers. And the three, mounted on their three sleek-slender brown horses, with their three white-ridged faces, set out for the fairy strand. And on the third night, at the cold mouth of dawn, they rode home, having done what they set out to do. By the side of her dead lover, “to the fairy hill I go.” sings the maiden, “never to return at the sowing of the seed or the reaping of the corn, till the very seals shall come on shore, to sow their barley in our black peat moss!”

English translation of the words:

Far I see the fairy hill,
Yon hill where holly and red rowans grow,
Aye, I see you fairy hill,
My lover leaning there below.
*Love to Gillivan hoon-dree ho ro hoon-dree ho,*
*Love that took my sleep off me,*
*Love to Gillivan hoon-dree ho ro hoon-dree ho!*

*Refrain lines (in italics) repeat in each verse.*

Ne’er my secret love was told
By waters where sweet cresses grew,
Nor heard where cuckoo makes her song,
The leafy branching woodlands through.

Ne’er I vow, shall I return,
my mortal kin again to greet,
Till the seals shall come ashore
Wi’ corn to sow the moorland peat.

Far I see yon hill.