

Very First Time I Saw My Love

As sung by
Pearl Jacobs Borusky
08-30-1940 Antigo, WI



Verse 1.

The very first time I saw my love,
I was very sick in bed.
And the only request I ask'd of her,
Was to tie up my head.
Oh, loving is a killing thing.
Did you ever feel the pain?
Did you ever see a man so sick as I,
For to get well again?

Verse 2.

I wish my love was a rose so red,
And in yon garden grew.
And if I was a gardener,
Great care I'd take of you.
There would not a month in the year around,
But what I would renew.
I'd garnish you all around and about
With Sweet William, Thyme, and Rue.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Treat, no. 39, Peters, p. 128, and HST

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by Pearl Jacobs Borusky, age 39, Antigo, 1940.

There is a kinship between the verses of this song and "Oh Love it is a killing thing" in Joyce's collection of Irish songs. He presents the verses with the comment "I give the words of this song form memory as I learned them in boyhood."

Asher Treat notated the song in 1933 from hearing the mother Mrs. Ollie Jacobs sing it. Pearl's melody is basically the same, except for a few melodic embellishments, which are distinctive of the daughter's style of singing.

Alternate titles/related songs: "The True Lover's Farewell," "Oh Love it is a Killing Thing," "The Irish Girl."

Sources:

- Barry, Phillips, ed. *The Maine Woods Songster*. Cambridge, Mass.: Powell Printing, 1939. "The Irish Girl." Different tune with many more verses, including very similar versions of both of the HST verses.
- Joyce, Patrick Weston. *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909. "Oh Love it is a killing thing"
- Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.
- Sharp, Cecil J., collector. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. "The True Lover's Farewell" (version E) has slight similarities.
- Treat, Asher E. "Kentucky Folksong in Northern Wisconsin." *The Journal of American Folklore* 52, no. 203 (Jan.-Mar. 1939): 1-51.

K.G.