

# Òran na Maighdean Mhara

## The Mermaid's Song

### Sèist

*Hù-bha is na hoireann hù-bha,  
Hù-bha is na hoireann hù-bha,  
Hù-bha is na hoireann hì  
Hù-bha is na hoireann hì  
Hù-bha is na hoireann hù-bha,  
Hù-bha is na hoireann hù-bha,  
'S ann le foill a mheall thu mi.  
It was with treachery you deceived me.*

### Rann 1

**A-mach air bhàrr nan stuagh ri gaillinn,**  
Out on the crest of the waves in storms,  
**Fuachd is feannadh fad o thìr,**  
Cold and chilled, far from land,  
**Bha mo ghaol dhut daonnan fallain,**  
My love for you was always sound,  
**Ged is maighdeann mhara mi.**  
Although it is a mermaid I am.

### Rann 2

**Chan eil mo chadal-sa ach luaineach,**  
My sleep is but restless,  
**'Nuair bhios buaireas air an t-sìd**  
When there is troubled weather  
**Bha mi'n raoir an Coire Bhreacain,**  
Last night I was in Corryvreckan,  
**Bidh mi 'n nochd an Eilean I.**  
Tonight I will be in Iona.

### Rann 3

**Seall is faic an grunn na fairge,**  
Look and see at the bottom of the ocean,  
**Uamhan airgid 's òir gun dìth,**  
Caves of silver and gold in plenty,  
**Lainnearachd chan fhaca sùil e,**  
Brilliance no eye has ever seen,  
**Ann an cùirt no lùchairt rìgh.**  
In the courts or palaces of a King.

*foill - treachery; mheall - deceived;*

**A-mach** - out; **bhàrr** - crest; **stuagh** - wave;  
**gaillinn** - storm; **Fuachd** - cold; **feannadh** -  
chilled; **fad** - far; **thìr** - land; **ghaol** - love;  
**dhut** - for you; **daonnan** - always; **fallain** -  
healthy, sound; **Ged** - although; **maighdeann**  
**mhara** - mermaid;

**chadal** - sleep; **luaineach** - restless; **Nuair** -  
when; **bhios** - would be; **buaireas** - trouble;  
**sìd'** - weather; **raoir** - last night; **'n nochd** -  
tonight; **Coire Bhreacain** - Corryvreckan (a  
violent whirlpool to the north of Jura);  
**Eilean I** - Iona (a calm, holy place);

**Seall** - look; **faic** - see; **grunn** - bottom;  
**fairge** - ocean; **Uamhan** - caves; **airgid** -  
silver; **gun** - without; **dìth** - want;  
**Lainnearachd** - brilliance; **fhaca** - seen; **sùil**  
- eye; **cùirt** - courts; **lùchairt** - palaces; **rìgh**  
- king;

The mermaid in this song is a Selkie - a seal woman. Selkies, both male and female, have the ability to come ashore and cast and hide their skins. They are then irresistible to any land borne person of the opposite sex. They can only stay ashore for a short time before they have the urge to return to the sea. If their land based partner can find the shed skin and hide it somewhere else the Selkie will have to remain. In many folk tales the Selkie is thus tricked into marrying a man and possibly having children with him. When she finds her skin she has to abandon her family and return to the sea.

Here she tries to entice her lover to join her in the ocean and live in luxury beneath the waves.