



Samhain's
March:
A Winter Journey

James Old Oden

SAMHAIN'S MARCH

A Winter Journey

Samhain is both an ancient Celtic holiday and in the Celtic calendar it is the month that falls around November. It marks the beginning of the Celtic year and the beginning of winter, the dying time. A time we must all march through every year reminding us of our mortality and the winter that comes to our own lives. It is a march through a barren land where the distant light of Spring's promise is not visible to the eye but can be seen by our hearts alone. It is a march to be made bravely and without trembling.

It is Samhain's March.



SAMHAIN'S MARCH (6/8 March) by James Olin Oden

Chieftain High D Whistle, Tony Dixon Low D Whistle, Bodhran - James Olin Oden
Uilleann Pipes - Eric Hahn Double Bass (Drone) - David Pitts

This is a tune I wrote a few years ago just before Samhain and is the inspiration for the album.

LAKES OF PONTCHARTRAIN

(traditional ballad)/Caitlin's Waltz (Caitlin Cary)

Chieftain High D Whistle, Tony Dixon Low D Whistle, Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden
Concertina - Allen Baker, Uilleann Pipes - Eric Hahn, Fiddle, Vocals - Caitlin Cary, Double Bass - David Pitts

This is a lovely ballad and though it is about a young man in Louisiana, it is quite squarely in the Irish tradition. I first heard Planxty do this on the album "Cold Blow the Rainy Night" and then later I heard Paul Brady's version. It is a song about finding one's love in a time of adversity only to find she belongs to another. This particular arrangement comes with a counter melody I like to call Caitlin's Waltz written by Caitlin Cary.

It was one bright March morning, I bid New Orleans adieu,
I rode the roads to Jackson town, me fortune to renew,

I cursed all foreign money, no credit could I find,
Which made me heart long for the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

I stepped on board a railroad car, beneath the morning sun,
I rode the roads till evening, I laid me down again,

All strangers there, no friends to me, till a dark girl towards me came,
I fell in love with a creole girl from the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

I said me bonnie creole girl, "Me money here's no good,
If it weren't for the alligators I'd sleep out in the woods."

"Kind sir your welcome her, though our house is very plain,
We never turn a stranger out from the Lakes of Pontchartrain."

She took me to her mammy's house, and treated me quite well,
The hair upon her shoulder's in jet black ringlets flowed,
To try and paint her beauty I'm sure would be in vain,
So handsome was my creole girl from the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

I asked her if she'd marry me, she said "this ne'er could be,"
For she had got another and he was far at sea,
She said that she would wait for him and true she would remain,
Till he returned for his creole girl by the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

So fare the well, me bonny old lass, I never will see you no more,
But I'll ne'er forget your kindness in the cottage by the shore,
And at each social gathering, a flowing glass I'll raise,
I'll drink a health to my creole girl by the Lakes of Pontchartrain.

THE SMILE SHE LEFT ME / KATHERINE'S FANCY ARD AN BOTHAIR / BIMID AG OL

(Marche's and Jigs in 6/8)

Chieftain High D Whistle, Classical Guitar, Bodhran, Bones - James Olin Oden

The first tune, *The Smile She Left Me*, was inspired by the feeling a man has after a woman kisses him only so briefly leaving him with pleasant and somewhat fiery feelings. *Katherine's Fancy* is a tune I wrote few springs ago. I originally called it Beltaine's Flower but when Allen Baker first heard it, he said I should call it Katherine's Fancy and so I did (Katherine is my beloved wife). The next tune *Ard An Bothair*, Irish for the High Part of the Road, is a tune I picked up from Tommy People's album of the same name. Finally, the last tune, *Bimid Ag Ol*, is actually an old Gaelic drinking song which means "We be drinking". I first heard Jerry Bourke sing it on the compilation "The Very Best of the Original Legendary Irish Folk Festivals". I figured out the melody on the whistle and have been playing it ever since.



P STANDS FOR PADDY (traditional ballad)

Classical Guitar, Bones, Vocals - James Olin Oden, Concertina - Allen Baker, Fiddle, Vocals - Caitlin Cary
Double Bass - David Pitts

I heard this song on Planxty's "Cold Blow the Rainy Night". It is a very old ballad about a man overhearing the plight of two lovers. To the misfortune of the woman, the man has found another. Oddly the song does not end on a sad note, but focuses on the love of the man for his new partner. Cara Dillon's album "Hill of Thieves" has another really good version on it. What is more interesting about the album is it also contains the song "The Verdant Braes Of Skreen" which certainly appears to be another, much sadder, mournful version of this song.

(chorus)

"P" stands for Paddy, I suppose,
"J" for my love John,
And "W" stands for false Willy-O,
But Johnny is the fairest one.

Johnny is the fairest one my dear,
Johnny is the fairest of them all,
And I don't care what anybody thinks,
Johnny is the fairest one.

As I went out one May morning,
To take a pleasant walk,
I sat me self down upon an old stone wall,
To hear two lover's talk.
To hear what they might say, my dear,
To hear what they might say,
That I might learn a little more about love,
Before I go away.

(chorus)

"Come sit you down beside by me, he said,
Together and agree,
It's been three quarters of a year, or more,
Since you and I have been."
"I'll not sit by you, no love,
Now or any other time,

For you've gone and found yourself another
little girl,
And your hearts no longer mine!
"Your hearts no longer mine!", she said,
"Your hearts no longer mine!
It's been three quarters of a year, no more,
And your hearts no longer mine!"

(chorus)

Now I'll go climb the tall tall tree,
And rob the wild bird's nest,
And when I come down, I'll give a little love,
To the girl I love best!
To the girl that I love best, my dear,
The girl that I love best,
When I come down I'll give a little love
To the girl that I love best!

"P" stands for Paddy, I suppose,
"J" for my love John,
And "W" stands for false Willy-O,
But Johnny is the fairest one.
Johnny is the fairest one my dear,
Johnny is the fairest of them all,
And when I go on I'll know a little more,
About love before I travel on.

THE WELL BELOW THE VALLEY

(traditional)

Tony Dixon Low D Whistle, Classical Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden, Fiddle, Vocals - Caitlin Cary
Double Bass - David Pitts

This haunting ballad is a dark tale of incest and murder. The lyrics come pretty much from the version Christy Moore did on the Planxty album "The Well Below the Valley".

A gentlemen was passing by,
He asked for a drink as he got dry,

(refrain)

**At the well below the valley-O
Green grows the Lilly-O,
Right among the bushes-O.**

Me cup is filled up to the brim,
If I was to stoup I might fall in.

If your true love was passing by,
You'd hand him a cup if he got dry.

She swore be grass, she swore be corn,
That her true love had never been born.

He said "Young maid your swearing wrong,
For six fine children you have born."

She said, "If you be a man of noble deed,
You'll tell to me the father of them.

There's two be your uncle Dan.

There's two be your brother John.
There's two be your father dear.
I you be a man of noble 'steem,
You'll tell to me what did happen to them.
There's two buried neathe stable door.
There's two buried neathe kitchen door.
There's two buried beneath the well.
If you be a man of noble deed,
You'll tell to me what will happen me self.
You'll spend seven years a ringing the bell.
You'll spend seven more a portin' in Hell.
I'll spend seven years a ringing the bell,
But the Lord above may save me soul,
From portin' in Hell,
At the well below the valley-O
Green grows the lilly-O,
Right among the bushes-O.

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE WHISKEY

by James Olin Oden.

Classical Guitar, Bodhran, Bones, Vocals - James Olin Oden
Double Bass - David Pitts

This is a fun song about seeing the things of true value amidst the burden's of life. The inspiration for this song occurred in a little dive in Raleigh, NC called the Farmhouse. I was hanging out with many beloved friends that night, while good tunes were being played by another friend's band. That said, I had a hellish week at work and was just a little bit numb mentally. At some point, I ordered my first whiskey, and as I brought the glass to my mouth the scent of the whiskey woke me up as it were.

There I was standing in the bar,
Sipping on the waters of life.
My mind being cloudy, my thoughts unclear,
Till a sure clarity came over me.
(chorus)

Wake up and smell the whiskey,
Don't let your life pass you by,
Life can be hard, a heart can grow numb,
So wake up and smell the whiskey!

Standing with me mates, all around me,
There was no other place I'd rather be,
And who's to say that life's true purpose,
Isn't like social meetings.
(chorus)

The day's toil, it breaks my back,
And leaves my mind in disarray,
It makes me want to lay me down, and dream my life away,
But I know that the dream is really here.
(chorus)
(chorus)

Wake up and smell the whiskey!
Wake up and smell the whiskey!

SAMHAIN'S MARCH REVISITED (6/8 March)

by James Olin Oden

Chieftain High D Whistle, Tony Dixon Low D Whistle, Bodhran - James Olin Oden
Double Bass - David Pitts

DOWIE DEN'S OF YARROW (traditional)

Vocals - James Olin Oden

This is a very old and very sad Scottish ballad. It is the typical story of a young man loving a woman above his station, and meeting an untimely end, leaving his love with an abiding sorrow.

The song is sung a cappella in a "mild" Scottish dialect.

There was a lady in the north,
You could scarcely find here morrow,
She was courted by nine noble men,
And here ploo-man boy O-Yarrow.

As he gae dar yon high high hill,
And doon a path sae narrow,
It was there he spied nine noble men,
Come to fight with him on Yarrow.

Three he slew, and three withdrew,
And three lay dying wounded,
Till here brother John stepped in behind,
And pierced is body through-h-O.

"Gae hame, gae hame, ye false young man!
and tell your sister sorrow,
For here true love, John,
Lies dead and gone, and a bloody corpse on Yarrow!"

As he gae dar yon high high hill,
And doon a pass sae narrow,
It was there he saw his sister dear,
She was coming fast for Yarrow.

"Oh brother dear, I've dreamt a dream,
And I hope it won't prove sorrow,
For I dreamt that ye were spilling blud,
On the dowie dens O-Yarrow."

"Well, sister dear I'll rede your dream,
And I know it will prove sorrow,
For your true love John, lies dead and gone,
And a bloody corpse on Yarrow."

Well this maid's hair was three quarters lang,
And the color O it was yellow,
She's tied it roon his middle so sma,
And she's carried him hame through Yarrow.

"O dochter dear, dry off your tears,
And dwell nae mair in sorrow,
For I'll wed you tae a far higher degree,
Than your plooman boy O-Yarrow."

"Oh faither dear, yeeve siven braw sons,
Ye could wed them all tomorrow,
But a fairer floor there ne'er was born,
Than me ploomen boy of Yarrow."

SAMHAIN'S MARCH (Classical Guitar)

Classical Guitar - James Olin Oden

ALWAYS IN BLOOM

by James Olin Oden

Guitar, Bones and Vocals - James Olin Oden, Double Bass - David Pitts

This is a song about the flower of love that is in bloom in every season.

I wrote it about a week after meeting my wife, Katherine.

Darling, you're beautiful in the morning time,
Honey, you sparkle in the moon shine,
And all the flowers that bloom in the day or night,
They just don't compare to you.

Your smile is like the morning sunshine,
Your eyes they sparkle like the stars at night,
And standing here with you is all I ever want,
In the day or the night.

(Chorus)

The morning glories wake to kiss the dawn,
The moon flowers bloom in the evening time,
But you darling are always in bloom,
You are always beautiful!

Some flowers they bloom in spring time,
Others bloom on into the summer time,
But you darling are always in bloom,
Even in the winter time.

Darling, your beautiful in the morning time,
Honey, you sparkle in the moon shine,
And all the flowers that bloom in the day or night,
They just don't compare to you.

(Chorus)

You are always beautiful

THE FIRST SHOOTS OF SPRING

by James Olin Oden

Chieftain High D Whistle, Bodhran, Bones, Classical Guitar, Vocals - James Olin Oden
Bowed Double Bass - David Pitts

This song was written at the beginning of the spring of 2009. It started as a whistle tune, that I wrote after noticing the new growth on the trees. I was impressed by how the new leaves were curled up and wrinkly quite like a new born child. This song speaks of the hope we find in these first shoots of spring. Having passed through Samhain's March we come to Beltaine and rejoice in the life of the Creator.

Don't leave me love, don't leave me love, don't leave me all alone,
But I see now that you're already gone,
The cold winter winds have come take you away,
And left me here all alone within this land so grey.

(chorus)

Like to a newborn child, a lullaby we sing,
Hope is born anew on the first shoots of spring,
When winter passes by and all seems dead,
Hope is born anew on the first shoots of spring.

A darkness love, a darkness love has come over me,
The light is dim, the night so bleak, I can hardly see,
Now all alone I hope and pray for the dawn,
Till first I see the gentle rays of the rising sun.

(chorus)

A journey love, a journey love, I have made,
Through Samhain's March I dared to cross unto Beltaine,
The dying time has left me so bitter cold,
I journey now, I journey now, into the Spring!

(chorus)

(chorus)

Recorded, Mixed & Mastered by Greg Elkins at Desolation Row
Produced by James Olin Oden and Greg Elkins
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THANKS

Kudo's to Katherine, my wife, for putting up with the endless hours this project entailed, and for encouraging me so much when it seemed like this album would never be finished. Ishti, my woman, I adore you!

Big thanks to Greg Elkins, the man with the ears. His honesty and earnestness is the reason this album is what it is. Thanks to Eric Hahn for devoting so much time to learning all the tunes, and a constant source of support. Thanks to Bruce Stevenson for so much excellent advice. To, Allen Baker, Auld Whiskey Beer himself, Sláinte Mhór! To Abby Sales for constantly encouraging me to tell the story. To Caitlin Cary for the awesome vocals and fiddle work. To David Pitts for stepping into an unknown genre and working to produce some incredible bass tracks (truly you went above and beyond). To Dennis Beckwith for listening and critiquing almost every version of the album as it progressed. To Johnny Pyburn for his infectious enthusiasm and love for life. To Benton, dude you rock! Thanks to Big Boss Brewery and all my brothers that hang at Horniblow's; you're as dear as family. To my Tir Na nÓg family, strength! To all my friends and family that have supported this effort and me in countless, sometimes unseen ways. A great big thanks to all the folks that listened to me over the years at camp fires, pubs and homes, who helped me to grow, and who I hope have been blessed by my singing and playing. May your hearts all be filled with grace, and may your lives all bring forth the music of a living tradition of hope, strength and grace. Finally, Thanks to the Creator without whom none of this would be possible, and whose inspiration and glory is seen in all creation. To the One who will surely guide us through the valley of the shadow of death into life everlasting, all praise and glory be His! *Sof Davar!*

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- A photograph of a man with long hair and a beard, wearing a cap and a grey hoodie, sitting on a grassy cliff edge. He is playing a tin whistle. The background shows a vast, blue ocean with rocky cliffs in the distance under a clear sky.
- 1) Samhain's March Intro (1:55)
 - 2) Lakes of Pontchartrain (6:50)
 - 3) The Smile She Left Me/Katherine's Fancy/Ard An Bothair/Bimid Ag Ol (4:15)
 - 4) P Stands for Paddy (5:33)
 - 5) The Well Below the Valley (5:22)
 - 6) Samhain's March Revisited (1:50)
 - 7) Wake Up and Smell the Whiskey (4:07)
 - 8) Dowie Dens of Yarrow (4:59)
 - 9) Samhain's March Finale (1:52)
 - 10) Always in Bloom (3:40)
 - 11) First Shoots of Spring (4:41)