June on Achill Island

Rhododendrons twenty feet tall line the backyard of this cottage, and purple foxglove, wild, up to my waist, their belladonna bells looking downward. What I call weeds at home are intermixed—buttercups flanked by a tiny pink flower I don’t recognize, and thistle.

Heading west nine miles through bogs, past peat stacked in neat bundles we reach Keel Beach, a machair, a low flat plain of sand, remains of sea—animals’ shells ground fine. I sit in the dunes, away from the quiet waves, among the marram and lyme grass.

I fill my notebook, feast on the unfamiliar until it becomes the familiar. The long days at this latitude mean less time for dreaming in sleep so dreaming must be done in the daytime, preferably while climbing a rugged hill, stones jutting from rough grass, sheep grazing next to stone piles, remnants of transhumanence, the days when people invited their flocks in at night to share the common hearth, curl up beside the peat’s last embers.

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Dreaming Must Be Done
In the Daytime

Lynne Viti © 2019

Dreaming Must Be Done
in the Daytime

Hollyhocks

A flower from an English cottage garden, a sixteenth-century word hard to wrap the tongue around, six-foot-tall stalk with colored orbs, the best one maroon so dark it fades into licorice black.

We stood on our godmother’s wooden back porch, looking towards the alley that ran alongside her yard. In narrow garden beds that lined the concrete walkways, tomatoes prospered in the city heat.

From our wading pool we watched the hollyhocks, tall as men. They loomed week after summer week as each bright green bud awaited its turn to open into a flower with a five-inch span.

Hollyhocks

The Friday Night Irregulars

Snow predicted, sun gone earlier than usual. At the Post Office counter, the computer stalls, the postal clerk says no credit, only debit—I mail a first-class envelope full of poems. It’s aimed southwards, where they enjoy 31 minutes more of day than we.

I don’t begrudge those southerners more daylight. Tonight I’ll dine with the Friday Night Irregulars, comfort food and a warm fire in the hearth, a full glass of red wine or two because some days you’ve got to have the red to see you through these dark nights, the red to accompany the jokes, the talk of politics, the lamentations, the carping, the laughter beating back the blues.

Highbush Blueberries

Alone, I put in an hour’s work for a scant pint. Together, probing branches for the blue-black gems, we could harvest enough for three or four pies. We city girls never picked berries—our mother sent us to Girl Scout camp to swim, for fresh air, or perhaps it was just to get us out of her hair in the dog days of August, her time to laze, reading paperback mysteries till midnight.

I miss you here, picking berries with me, finding that laughter with me, the giggles that spawned more, and more, until we held our sides from laughing?

Where’s it gone, that easy bond between two sisters, one shy but bossy, one always ready for a fight?