

The Cathedral by Roisin Kelly

I

When you were fifteen, the bookshop
on Belfast's Royal Avenue burned to ash
a bonfire's autumn kindling.
The hush of books, your small feet

on the carpet, the dim light that filtered
down from stained-glass domes
exist now only in your memory.

II

In Leitrim you hang clothes
out on the line. From the back garden
as you peg shirts and pants—

hardly looking, as if you are playing
the piano—you gaze to Sliabh an Iarainn
smoke-grey and more distant

than it seems; beyond Drumshanbo even
close to the coal-dust of Arigna.

III

On Sea Road in Galway
the Crane Bar and the locksmith

are strung with lights for Christmas.
Devaney's Goat in D
and the Broken Pledge in D minor
filter through the lit doorway and echo

to the yoga room, where women salute
the vanished sun and practise
at being trees.

IV

The woods on Clare Island are called Lasso.
At Christmas the islanders come
with little axes for bits of holly.

Among moss-covered boulders
blackberries are green and hard
sheltered from the ripening sun.

You stand among the trees
look out on Portlea Strand and listen
to the machinery's whine at the salmon farm

and wonder when he will realise
that you are gone.

V
Be still. What you seek
will come to you in quiet moments.

See the cathedral in its sunlit plaza.
You have built this silent city
this church of honey-coloured stone.

Stand within its cool walls
below the yellow rose window.
Hold out your hands

as if memories of books you never read
and lives you never lived
are there to grasp
in a sunbeam's descent of dust.

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