

Mrs Corey's Lament

Here I am walkin' the roads again cryin' me eyes out. But I just can't stay in the house since I got the news about Pat. He's everywhere in there. If I sit at the kitchen table there he is, six years old again and askin' me, "Ma' can I have more of the cake?" Or, "Can I go out with Jimmy to play football?" I go in the cowshed and there he is again in the summer of '14, a big strappin' lad of 18 milkin' the cows and his backside too big for the milkin' stool, sayin', "Here Ma' we'll have to get Daddy to make a new stool."

In his old bedroom I can still smell him off the blankets... I never washed them after he left see.

I can't bear it now. It were bad enough to lose my Paddy to the sickness last winter but I could bear that, he had a good long life anyway.

But Pat, Pat, he told me he'd be back by Christmas with some extra money for things we needed round the farm. He didn't come, not that Christmas, nor the next, nor the one after and now he's never comin' at all.

I know the neighbours think I'm gone crazy and Mrs Mac told me there's whispers about puttin' me in the mental. I don't care really what they do – there's only me left now and no-one to leave the farm to when I'm gone- no nieces or nephews, no cousins, no nothin'. The neighbours have been kind to me though, they're takin' turns to look after the farm for me. But they turn their eyes away, they can't look at me 'cos their sons are all safe so far. I'm the first from the village to lose a son, though there's lots been lost in Omagh and Castlederg and all the towns round about.

If I'd known it was goin' to be like this I'd a' tied him to the big post in the barn to keep him home. But he said it'd be fun, an adventure, an' he was always up for a bit of fun anyway.

He'll have no fun where he is now, tho' maybe they play football in heaven.

I don't know, don't care really. They can put me in the mental if they want- I can't go back to that house, not with Pat's ghost sittin' there at the table.

John Monaghan