

The Back Field, Loughan



He dug in silence

Except for the rattle and wheeze
Of the upcoming sticky spit
Which he exacted with precision
From the right corner of his mouth
Tobacco stained, streaked in landing
On the earthly ridge verge
Earlies must be in by Patrick's Day
'They' say and so it is taken as gospel

She carries tae in a bottle, square cut
Rough glass, bainne from the dawn
Milking already added, cream topped
And all rests in the clanky, weighty
Bucket, lifelong serving

The cotton wrap to seal the warmth
Is frayed and tattered at the edges
Butter slathered on the oven warm loaf
Melting into a chewy goo
And just as well, because he has left
His teeth steeping in the chipped mug
On the bedside table next Our Lady

He never called her by her name
Though age divided, love and respect
Has settled between them
'Blue sky' he proffers but no 'thanks'
For it isn't in his wordage

She backs away softly, to retrace
The steps across dew-webbed grass
Lace-like in its delicate form
Toward the gate, so distant
And knows its worth.

Kate O'Shea

Image: Wood Engraving by Claire Leighton