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A Quick Turn of Soil

Mormor, my mother's mother, knows where everyone is buried in Fullestad's *kyrkogård* outside of Lågmansholm and plods up the hill with the solid-footed stride that accompanies her knowledge of tasks—*ett, två, tre*—that need to be completed now, here. She's disappeared along the bleached path and through the cemetery gate even before I slam the passenger door on the rented Volvo, her floral skirt slapping the backs of her thick-veined calves and sturdy ankles, the narrowness of her shoulders accentuated by the way she leans forward at the waist, full of direction. She knows how to visit a grave. My mother hesitates slightly in this spare-grassed area where she's parked, slowly turning her head to survey the farms in the shallow valley below this rise of church land. As we drove, she pointed from behind the steering wheel to describe every child she ever played with in each farmhouse, every bit of food she ever ate from wooden tables in garden after garden, every piece of passed-down, spotless parlor furniture she'd been so impressed with at ten or eleven years old and told not to touch. Her memory stirs as we navigate the small community of her childhood, images seeping like water from a newly fractured vessel. Even still, she seems hesitant to remember the order of ritual that accompanies this place, stopping in the cemetery's open gateway as if she is momentarily lost, as if she has to remember how to visit a grave. This is not something I can show her.

She does this in Sweden: closes her eyes, steels her mouth, breathes through her nose with nostrils flaring slightly. I think this is the act of smelling her childhood in every building or yard or shop or garden or home we enter. She is beautiful in the dappled summer light, round face rosy and shining in the humidity, a cloth bag stuffed with paper-wrapped flowers hanging at her side, crocheted purse slipping from her shoulder, toes turned slightly outward in beige canvas sandals she bought for the trip, ankles puffed from walking and heat. Ours is the only car here on a weekday afternoon. The engine ticks in the shade beneath papery birch trees. My mother says, "This is the archway where everyone had a picture taken with the minister after first communion." I know her photograph. She is fourteen, her then-new dress shockingly stark and white against the muted grey tones of church and old stone and minister's vestments. Her blonde hair, sunlight reflecting from its just-combed gloss, is the same bright white. She looks fresh, renewed, alive

with accomplishment and faith. In five years from that day she will board a plane for America—and while it will never have been her intent to stay there, she will never live in Sweden again.

I have blood beneath this soil, but am an imposter in this *kyrkogård*, in this country, even though I look like I belong. I have the same square jaw, pale eyes and hair and skin—even paler than my cousins who have lived here their entire lives—but I have this hard-shelled sensibility that sees a graveyard as something to be avoided or not talked about, a place to walk away from after it has swallowed a body, and this feels like the American in me. I don't speak with authority on this; I've only seen two filled coffins in my life. I speak with the voice of someone who sees all differences between her two cultures before she'll admit similarities, whose families are separated by an ocean, a series of flight and flight and flight, who sees herself with a careful toehold on each shore, someone who operates in halves, wondering which half creates which response in life. I don't know if there is an "American" response to a graveyard, I don't feel comfortable generalizing about an entire country's way of grieving, I only know what I have seen so far. But if there is a part of me that wants to leave this place, this is clearly the half that does.

I have a captain's trunk filled with embroidered table cloths and crocheted doilies hand-worked by these buried relatives. Within the last decade, I've moved thousands of miles at a time—from Nevada to British Columbia to Alaska—and although I've never chosen to display much of the trunk's contents in any of my homes, I've never once considered lightening its load. Somehow the oak sides, metal corners, leather straps, and removable cedar shelf continue to accommodate the never-ending byproducts of busy Swedish hands. My mother's trunks and closets are the same: bulging. We will never be able to use all of these table runners and curtains and embroideries, but we keep them. Why?

My father's mother, Grandma Alice, said to my mother once, "Ingrid, don't worship the dead," maybe in annoyed response to my mother's methodic practice of washing old linens in cold water with lemon juice before line drying and hand pressing. Perhaps my American grandmother's habits formed while scraping through the Depression and deciding to never look back on that time: *It's just junk. Throw it away and buy new.*

My mother hoards these comments dropped in her lap during the last thirty-five years of marriage to an American man, filling the closets in her mind. And now it's been several months since Grandma Alice passed away and I will never know the true context of these broken conversations—if my mother just misunderstood her mother-in-law's intentions or

was overly sensitive to the subtleties of language. Who misunderstood whom? She may or may not remember the context any longer either, but she will pull snippets from this vault when they feel appropriate to her, when she feels a pain similar to the one she felt when they were spoken in the first place. And, no, none of us feels a need to worship the dead, but my mother needs to tend the ground they are buried beneath, regardless of country.

This tiny cemetery is surrounded by fine birch trees and long bent August grass shuddering up the slope behind the bench where we leave bags, purses, and cotton sweaters, all manner of traveling paraphernalia, the layers we bring with us everywhere and then shed in the heat. My mother runs her fingers along the smooth slats of the bench. She says, "This was Moster Maja-Greta's idea—she asked the church to bring a bench for her to rest on since she was so tired when she came to visit her mother and father's graves every day after work." And while my mother feels that the thrust of what she has just told me is the fact that her aunt had the clout to have a bench erected in the *kyrkogård* twenty years ago, I am more struck by the fact that Maja-Greta would travel so far out of her way after working twelve-hour shifts at the hospital in Ålingsås, to sit in the cemetery before going home to take care of her husband, John, who was dying of cancer at the time. I am struck by the fact that the *kyrkogård* is where she chose to come. If I felt that much pain, the exhaustion born from the wait for death, I don't know where I would sit.

The paths are pea gravel, as are the larger plots where multiple generations of families are buried, the gray loose stones contained within square-poured frames of cement or sculpted marble or granite. Some corners are cracked. Some panels have settled away from the others by as much as the width of my hand. The church provides child-sized rakes for patterning these beds and the most ambitious designs look mosaic, mathematical in their rigor, the striations at forty five- and ninety-degree angles all placed with metal tines. A system lies within these designs, probably a series of steps to achieve the final result—first rake the center one direction, then rake the edges in another, finish the corners on an angle—but if so, the formula isn't readily apparent to me. Other designs are less formal, just simple raked stripes, like empty lined tablets of paper, the remains of a borrowed tool dragged back and forth in a slow meditation of grief. None of my relatives are buried beneath gravel, just simple earth. For this I'm grateful. The calculations for a gravel geometry seem more than I could manage on this day, my forehead already furrowed enough behind sweating blonde bangs—remembering names, faces, who presented me with which tablecloth on which birthday, which Christmas.

Mormor asks what I remember and I have to get it all right.

I cannot say I deeply loved anyone who is buried here, but my mother did. I do this for her, to respect her childhood; it's my obligation—but it's also an opportunity to observe her in an element she falls into with grace. She pats earth and smoothes rubble in the same way she serves cake, irons cotton tea towels, snaps sheets into folded order in her linen closet. Months later over the phone, I will ask her about this need to tend graves while we were in Sweden, we visited so many—if she still lived there, how often would she go to them? I'll ask if this is done from her own sense of obligation, or as a way to grieve, honor, remember? She didn't raise me with this ritual—why? We have relatives buried in the U.S., why not tend their graves? Where does she think souls go? Why so much emphasis put on a plot of land? And when I hear her voice break, when she takes a ragged breath before saying, "It just feels right," I know that I've approached this coldly and too analytically, like items checked off a cultural to-do list. And now I've made her cry.

I'll apologize for asking so many questions so early on a Tuesday winter morning after the snow has fallen dryly in her time zone and in mine, one hour behind; for ruining her day by asking her to remember family; for asking her to give me answers but not giving her the time to ask herself. And for days after, I will still feel terrible.

I've been to Fullestad before, on one of the earlier trips to my mother's homeland when I was two, or seven, or nine years old—maybe a visit to the church each time, but it all blurs together. The church's stonework evokes some memory of its interior, the coolness I think, or what might have been blue-painted walls, but today the church is locked and I'm shamefully relieved. An interior tour would mean more time spent here: *hours* extra. One would think I had a need to be somewhere else by the removed way that I am acting, but of course, I do not. The only words written on today's scrap-of-paper schedule are *blommorna, Fullestad's kyrkogård*: flowers, Fullestad's cemetery.

I don't know how to visit a grave, so I follow Mormor and my mother, weaving in and out of headstones in a helpless, stumbling way and scold myself silently, thinking I should learn something about respect. An hour earlier, I slouched in the hot car while they bought red, white, and blue flowers especially for this visit. I didn't want to go into the flower shop, even though I knew it would have made my mother happy to show off the nursery in Ålingsås where she had her first job, where she arrived on foot after school to deadhead marigolds and re-pot tomato plants in a greenhouse at fourteen. She

smiles to herself every time she mentions it, sometimes closes her eyes. I just didn't want to attempt my broken how-are-you-today-I-am-fine-Swedish with anyone else. I didn't want to visit any more cemeteries. I was starving. I was thirsty. I wanted to sit and act like I was nine years old out in the car with the windows rolled down even though I'm thirty and too old for scenes. I was sweating. Mostly, I just wanted a banana from the grocery store and sulked until we stopped there on the way to the cemetery.

I find Mormor in a shady corner of the *kyrkogård* at the water cistern, a square moss-covered cement tank as tall as her hip, filled with water that is just as mossy green from deep-waving algae. On a rack to the side hang rows of metal watering cans; below, green plastic cones stack in leaning towers. When I reach her, she is furiously scrubbing with bare fingers at the dried soil and black mildew that has accumulated on several cones, scouring so they look brand new and ready for our flowers, ready to punch into the ground for the process of decay to begin again. I fill two cans and the water sloshes onto my bare legs as I wobble back to the bench.

My mother packed a spool of red, white, and blue striped grosgrain ribbon in her suitcase for this trip, and cuts it into ten-inch lengths now with a pair of small gold bird scissors that glint in the sun. I can't believe she's remembered to bring those scissors. She pulls a wrapped bunch of flowers from the bag and angles them away from her. "These don't look very blue out here, do they?" she asks, frowning and brushing fine bangs from her eyes. They are the stiff flowers that look and feel dried even though they'll need water, the blooms more purple than blue in the sunlight. The red baby carnations are also off—magenta, really—but I don't say anything about this; instead I say, "I think they're fine, Mom, you have the right kind of blue in the ribbon." I know what she is doing because I've seen this ambassadorship before, the act of bringing one country's good will into the other. A kind of perfection.

When Grandma Alice died six months ago, my mother brought a bouquet of blue iris and tight yellow roses tied with blue and yellow ribbon to place on the coffin for the funeral. She stood like a signpost as people passed, "These are from my family in Sweden," she told each of my father's mute relatives as they ascended the grassy hill in the California wind. I think the American side of the family has always looked at my mother as a sort of quaint addition; the fact that she is foreign is a novelty, in an almost less-than-serious way. Even after almost forty years of living in the U.S., she still says "voven" instead of "woven," stumbles a little with grammar, and if we correct her as she's asked us to in the past, she'll say, "Oh. . . vell, vhat did *I* say it like?" Sometimes her

innocent thoughtfulness leaves others facing their own inadequacies though, as if she is flexing some sort of European superiority with her just-so ribbons, or sharp-creased tablecloths, or racks of cooling desserts. Someone, after receiving a hand-embroidered Christmas gift many years ago, told her to "get off her high horse." I watched her shake her head and cry after that; she still doesn't understand how someone could take a simple joy and twist it into something ugly.

The morning of Alice's funeral, my mother clipped roses from the bushes at my grandparents' house in the Sierra foothills, intending to scatter them on the grave—mementos from the garden my grandmother spent so much time tending before she became ill. She was buried in the newer section of the cemetery in Newcastle where none of the trees had grown yet and plots stared upward, exposed and unprotected. On the cold hill beneath a flapping tent roof, my mother sat red-eyed, arms abundant with peach, pink, and white cut roses. My three younger sisters, a cousin, and I filed into the first row of folding chairs facing the coffin, more from a need to fill seat space no one else would step forward for than a need to be that close. We all felt too young to be sitting in the most prominent location, but most of my grandparents' friends wouldn't come stand beneath the tent, said they were leaving seats for family. No amount of prodding could convince them to leave their huddled stance against the wind to take a sheltered chair. They wanted distance. We granddaughters cried there in the front row, but it was as if this was what the people standing behind expected from us. And I know I cried mainly because my youngest sister took the first ragged sob and I thought this was so heartbreaking, since at fifteen years younger than I, she had known Grandma the least.

After the service, my mother passed all of Alice's roses to the friends and family who had come empty-handed so they could all leave something behind, but some people still wouldn't come forward for this. My mother's aunt in Sweden used to tell her, "It's better to give flowers to a warm hand than a cold." The words are like a song you hear over and over; she used to say them every time we brought cut daffodils or tulips or pansies to someone's home, stems all wrapped in wet paper towels and rubber-banded plastic bags, but she didn't say it on this day.

This grave-visiting is slow work. My mother sits on Maja-Greta's bench with her face in the sun and eyes closed, ribbon spool in her lap, lengths of ribbon curling in the grass at her feet. I drop to my knees and begin separating the flowers into piles, thinking I have to make this move faster. "Mom, how many bouquets do you want to leave?" The names come

thoughtfully from her as she stares into the cloudless sky: "Gammal Mormor Nanny, Gammal Morfar Joseph, Moster Stina, Moster Maja-Greta, Morfar John, Morfar Lars' first wife Eivor. . . ." We count to seven in the end and she hands over one set of ribbons at a time, smoothing with her fingers before letting them go—one red, white, and blue, the other striped blue and yellow—and I bind with both. The bouquets arc in a semi-circle in the grass at my knees. "So that's seven," I say. But then there is some question—do we leave flowers on the neighbors' graves? What about for the other people my mother remembers from her childhood? One school friend, Ranghild, has an aunt and uncle buried here at Fullestad. Should we leave flowers for them also? Do the ribbons look long enough? Are the bouquets full enough? Should she have bought more flowers? She searches Mormor's face for the answer, for rules, for some etiquette she wants to be sure she gets right. As they decide, I crouch like a runner at the starting line, poised in the sun, ready to dismantle and rearrange my spindly bouquets in record time—I'll untie the ribbon I've bundled with, I'll re-distribute the red, white, and blue, I'll re-tie so the knots look more square than before. Just give me the answer and the assembly line is modified.

We weed in soil around headstones, pluck dead blooms. A map of the *kyrkogård* is seared on Mormor's brain—*ett*, *två*, *tre* steps to the left; *ett*, *två*, *tre* headstones to the right. Stop. Weed. Water. Begin again. My mother lingers longer. She says out loud what she remembers about each person's life. I nod. Is she sharing the most important thoughts and events, or just those nearest the surface? Soon strangers' graves feel neglected and I stop to swipe at the driest blooms, hold them sweaty and sharp in my palm—as if I have some responsibility based on presence: I am here now to do this since no one else has come lately. I watch my mother lean in as well, one foot off the ground to deadhead annuals from graves passed on the way to family. A squirt of water from the can, and I think we aren't so different in the ways of tidiness and order and task.

The *kyrkogård* is peaceful in its mid-week emptiness and my mother laughs when she tells me that after visiting Fullestad in 1994 with my younger sister, Erica, she'd asked, "Mom, how come Swedish cemeteries aren't like all totally scary?" And they aren't. Nothing is decrepit. Nothing is overgrown. Flowers are tended. The grass is dense and closely mowed. Gardening tools hang invitingly and compost bins maintained. Trees hum with birds and insects. So much evidence of the living.

When Grandma Alice's funeral ended, the family wandered on the bare hill like sheep. People wondered out loud and gestured to each other, "Are we meeting somewhere? Is there a

place for us all to go?" Cousins and the children of cousins had grown or changed and needed encouragement to speak to each other again in shy ways, but there wasn't time for this. Nothing had been organized for the afternoon of the funeral, we wouldn't attend the memorial for another four days, and suddenly we faced men in orange mesh vests who had all along been lingering on the outskirts of our grief, leaning on shovels into the wind. I couldn't understand how we hadn't seen the cemetery's work force waiting there during the entire service.

My father grabbed my mother's arm and said, "Ingrid, we have to leave right now—I can't stand here and watch my mother go into the ground." She stuttered and asked about groups meeting for lunch, or for coffee at least; we'd all driven so far for this. He said, "I just can't see putting my dad through that right now. He can't handle having a bunch of people back at the house. I can't handle it either." We walked back to the car—my mother and father, my three grown sisters and I—but it felt like running and stumbling, all slamming doors and buckling seatbelts. In the one-way parking lot where a barricade of cars idled ahead of us, waiting for other small groups of family members to disband, my mother threw the Suburban into a semi-panicked reverse and backed out of the lot, over a curb, and into the street while my father stared anywhere but at the bare hillside.

I make sure the ribbons hang over the green plastic cones so that they show well, before my mother asks me to. And when a small black snake darts from between the headstones, we all cry out and jump in a silly arm-grabbing way, relaxing as soon as it travels sideways through the grass with its tight head raised, then across the gravel path and into the tall dried grass behind Maja-Greta's bench. Mormor laughs and says, *"Orm!"* and pats her chest, sighing and laughing at the three of us. In front of Maja-Greta's headstone, a green cone overflows with pink and white flox, drooping slightly in the heat, and Mormor says these are the flowers that grow in her sister's garden in Jordala, the sign that my mother's youngest aunt and a cousin have been here in the *kyrkogård* within the last two days.

When I was eleven or twelve, I told my mother I wanted to be cremated, ashes spread at sea. We lived in Nevada, where she still lives with my father, and the ocean seemed like the opposite of the dust-filled gray desert I couldn't stand then. Her eyebrow cocked as if she didn't believe me at first—maybe I was talking about something I knew nothing about, something I'd read or seen in a movie—but then her face fell once she saw my eagerness. She asked, "Then how can I take care of your grave if there isn't

one for me to visit?" She was more hurt than disbelieving, and I sensed a panic that felt melodramatic to me, even at that age. I said, "Mom, you'd think about me every time you saw the ocean." This made perfect sense. She turned back to her pot on the stove, muttering, "*Vell*, I don't know, I just wasn't raised that vay," and ended the conversation.

I worried for a time that if I died she wouldn't cremate me. I even hand-wrote this in a will I thought she should have, some official-looking proof of sound mind and body in cursive on wide-ruled paper, but I don't remember ever handing it to her. What I didn't understand was the concept of a gravesite as a moment of grief, limited to the duration of a visit, a prod in the soil, a tidying of blooms. I didn't understand that by asking to be scattered at sea, how vast her grief would have to become, how completely uncontainable.

Here in the long-shadowed *kyrkogård*, she tells Mormor that no one has gone to Alice's grave yet and no one in the family talks about it. Almost every weekend since the spring funeral, she has asked my father if he will go. She offers to drive with him, but he says he isn't ready. She would travel the hour and a half through the Sierras and over Donner Pass to tend the grave herself if she felt like she wasn't disturbing some delicate balance of grief on my father's side of the family. Mormor shakes her head, and in Swedish, says she just doesn't understand this. I am suddenly ashamed when Mormor asks about "*blommorna från Sverige*" for Alice. The ribboned yellow and blue bouquet, wrapped in cellophane and left leaning against her coffin is described in great detail for Mormor now six months later, and my mother would have a photograph to show if I hadn't put my hand on her arm after the funeral and suggested in a whisper that she not take a picture of the coffin and the flowers. I'd created my own funerary etiquette based on gut feeling, based on what I thought was appropriate, based on what I thought was done at funerals even though it was one of my first. I was sure my father's family would have thought it disrespectful to capture this symbol of death in a photograph. Where do you keep a photograph like this? In the same album as the birthday parties? The births and weddings? How do you control your grief when you stumble upon it accidentally while looking through vacation photos? Physically visiting a cemetery is different—preparation, tasks—not like a photograph, where nothing grows or dries up or requires your tending fingers. I was acting from a place that *felt* right—trying to protect my father, my grandfather, my uncle, these broken American men—but what feels right depends on which country I'm standing in when I have to decide.

When my mother will cry on the phone with

me many months later, she'll say it's because she feels she has missed the funerals in her homeland, she has missed Christmases, Easters, birthdays. Her family is growing older. I want to believe, and I want her to believe, that what she has experienced as an American could be just as memorable, but hers is the family of childhood and it carries a particular weight the family of adulthood cannot. These are the people who shaped her and now, one by one, are buried. She does the only thing she can now on the sparse visits to Scandinavia, which is to show herself in the place they physically occupy. She says, "I feel them beside me in the *kyrkogård*, the same way I feel them when I walk through their homes." And I think I must be missing something.

I pretend my mother is buried here in Fullestad also, and I'm looking for her grave. This seems like the right place; I can't imagine tending her would-be grave in the desert where she lives now. I don't even know if she wants to be buried there. I consider the sting of sagebrush in the air, the potential for coiled rattlesnakes instead of the slim little traveling *orm*, the density of hard-packed earth beneath parched grass, the plastic flowers bleaching in sun. Nevada doesn't seem like the place to bury her; it leaves a pit burning in my stomach and I know I have to ask her what she wants. My guess is that this afternoon she's busy living and won't want to discuss her own death, yet she and her mother discusses the location of Mormor's plot in Ålingsås in the same easy way they discuss gardening or boiling potatoes. My mother explains that at Christmas, when as little as five hours of weak daylight punctuate the darkness, her family leaves lanterns on snow-covered graves. The flames burn in oil, staying lit for a week at a time. She says under her breath, "They always want to bring light into the *kyrkogård*," but I don't think to ask if she means that the church wants this, or those who have died, or those who have survived. The way her voice shakes, I know she misses the ritual. She would want something like this at her winter grave.

I have never been to a Swedish funeral. But on television, one month before my sixth birthday, I watched 75,000 mourners line the gates of Graceland, the street kept clear with wooden sawhorse barricades and short-sleeved wandering policemen, a crowd that would soon grow by the addition of 300 National Guardsmen. I watched the funeral procession, what seemed like hundreds of white sedans stretched for miles along the Memphis streets behind the one white hearse, its odd square-forehead encasing the coffin inside. Each following car became a link in the spine, each vertebrae growing progressively smaller, coiling around corners until disappearing behind a

building or off the edge of the television screen. The flower arrangements stacked outside of the mausoleum at the Forest Hill Cemetery were so thick I could have walked on them, their petals so densely meshed I could have run through and never touched the ground.

This, I believed, was an American funeral.

Less than one year after the broadcast, when my father's grandfather Carl died—a man my mother loved like her own grandfather—I couldn't attend his funeral because my parents thought I was too young. I remember thinking I would have to tell them I'd *promise* not to let go of their hands—that I would hold on tighter than I ever had before so they wouldn't lose me in the crowds of thousands of crying people and policemen who would come for Farfar Carl. I wanted to bring pansies and clover from the yard to add to the sea of bouquets I knew would lap at our feet. I didn't go. Neither did my father, but my mother did.

My mother finds Ranghild's aunt's and uncle's graves as we come to the front of the church on our way to the car. When she sees the freshly turned soil, the thirsty cut flowers, she says, "Oh, Ranghild has already come," and drops to her knees to water. Our last bouquets, the smallest of the group, one with no red carnations since we have none left, slip easily into the green cones and look like they belong with Ranghild's flowers even with their garish ribbon combination. My mother straightens and says, "Now she'll know we've come too." And although I know it's what this has meant all along, the red, white, and blue flowers showing our presence here, I realize that by leaving this footprint, it is less for the dead than to comfort the living who come afterwards. Could it relieve the burden of mourning, to know that someone else has been here recently, has cast a shadow on the soil and already tended it in some way? Perhaps it's an unspoken promise that the same care will be given to the mourner.

I've forgotten my watering can in the grass, but Mormor is returning it to the rack by the cistern to hang with others in ordered procession. The car is stuffy and hot since the shade has long since elongated over and past the metal hood, so we roll down the windows and wait for her to return down the crunching path. When she climbs into her seat, I say, "*Tak, Mormor*," and thump my forehead because I can't remember the words for "I forgot." The right phrase will come to me within minutes, but by then it is too late to say the words out loud. They won't mean anything anymore.

A rock retaining wall contains the oldest part of the *kyrkogård* we didn't wander through. The stones are set tightly, following the slope of the hill so the tallest masonry is my height, even taller with the wrought iron fence driven in place, and prevents the grief from spilling into the countryside. My mother stops the slow-

rolling car and says, "Oh, I remember that grave from my childhood, there, in the corner. Someone always planted blue violets there." I know the grave she sees, because I saw it, too, when we first arrived: a slim worn granite headstone with a white marble dove sitting on its edge. The bird glows starkly there, its stone texture so unlike its perch; it could be mistaken for something alive and pausing for breath before ruffling its glossy feathers and taking flight again. The three of us stare for a long time. Mormor sits behind me in the car and says nothing; with her tasks complete and the familiarity of this landscape etched in her mind, there isn't anything to say. My mother wonders out loud if, after so many years, anyone still plants violets there, considers whether they need water or a quick turn of soil. She finally pulls onto the narrow road and we descend gently into warm farmland. But I still need to linger and watch through the rear window, waiting for something to happen, as if the marble dove would lift its peg anchor from crumbling stone and decide that today is the day to fly from this place.