**Famine Figure**

I was driving to my aunts in the coast of Ireland, when it happened. I drove past an old abandoned cottage which I haven’t seen before, even though I have drove this way thousands of times. It instantly sent a chill through my spine. This cottage wasn’t newly built either. It was a pale grey shade as if all colour had been drained from the walls, layers of dirt and grime covered the window sill. The windows shadowed which made it almost impossible to see anything from afar. Victorian style drapes hung from the rod above the window and a narrow pebble path led the way to the old red door. I stopped the car almost instantly determined to observe the house for longer.

I slowly approached the house with caution and walked through the wild grass, my legs becoming cut with nettles wrapping round them but I was determined not to stop. I stood still in the spot observing the cottage and all its features. I became conscious of staring eyes burning into my back. I quickly turned round, always expecting the worst but what I saw was enough to make me want to scream in relief. It was a black cat, peering up at me with its majestic yellow eyes which glistened in the sun. Something about this cat made me turn cold, and I was going to find out what it was.

My hand felt drawn to the cat. As if a force was pulling me towards it. I drew back trying to resist the temptation. But just then the clouds shifted sending spells of grey rushing through the sky. My hair was blowing in the wind sending all my baby hairs to stand on edge. And that’s when I heard it. A whisper. I frantically searched my surroundings for a suspect to accuse, when I realised I was the only one here. The cat brushed against my leg and began meowing, leading me towards the cottage without any intention to stop. The wind grew wild It began to rain and the cottage door blew off its hinges. A figure stood in the frame of the door staring back at me, it was a woman. A Victorian woman.

I glanced at the figure, scared of what she might do. I stood anxious and hesitant. But I soon warmed up to the idea and carefully studied her features. Her face was slender and her cheekbones where defined like blades. Her eyes were empty like she was missing something very dear to her, her lips as red as a rose and her face like a porcelain doll. She looked deprived, of happiness, love and food. Her face showed a vague expression. Her shiny grey hair was carefully pinned back behind her ears. Her frail body was dressed in a black dress which was much too big, with a red shawl covering her narrow shoulders. I looked away for a brief second. And when I looked back. She was gone.

I stood frozen to the spot. afraid to move in case I ruined it all, waiting eagerly for the figure to reappear, but it didn’t. I stood watching the widow for what seemed like forever waiting for anything, a movement, a light, or even the strange cat. But again nothing. I began to walk home as I had lost all hope of explaining what I might’ve been on to.

Just at that second a sour smell crept over my shoulder and lingered in my nose. The wind blew causing all the trees to dance in the sky, blowing my hair every which way when I heard a whisper again in my ear. “Help” it cried. I turned like a bullet and standing there looming over my shoulder, was the woman. But this time she was not alone. She had two little girls, one by her side and one in her arms. They looked like twins. Both girls where dressed neatly in white with red bows perfectly placed in the centre of their jet black hair which complemented the porcelain white skin. However, one of the children looked awful. She was carefully held in the mother’s arms looking cold and lifeless. She was all skin and bone. She looked dead. I extended my arm to touch her hair sympathetically, and just then they all disappeared. Just like that. Gone. Jet black ash covered the dead grass and the sour smell disappeared. That’s when I realised. The smell was rotting potatoes.

Sad and anxious, I slowly walked towards my car. Not forgetting to stop for one last look, I opened the door, got in the car and sobbed. I struggled to think of how I could ever get over this and return to life like normal. The poor family will always remain in my mind and heart. So I put down my window, put on my seat belt and took a deep breath “Ok” I said. “Let’s go!” reassuring myself that I would be fine, I turned on the radio, put up the window and headed off.

By Lucy McDonnell