

Ruins of an Irish Castle

by Averie Basch

Inspired by my visit to Ballycarbery Castle, Ireland

If I were a legendary fairy queen,
I would build a castle upon a green hill,
So that I could be close to the sky
And close to the stars.
I would sit in a window and watch the ivy
As it grew up the sides of the wall.
I would watch the sun rise and set,
The moon wax and wane,
The stars be born and die.
I would live for centuries.
Upon my brow, I would wear a crown of moonbeams,
Because I would know how to bend the light to my will.
I would watch over the fairies' land from my window in my castle that I built,
And I would be a fair queen,
I would heal the sick, aid the poor, and bring food to the hungry.
I would be a just ruler, and in stories, my name would be spoken in awe.
Even when I disappeared from the lands, my famous castle would remain.

If I were a medieval princess,
I would live in my father's castle upon a green hill,
So that we would have a vantage point
And could defend ourselves from rival clans.
I would sit in a window and watch as the servants
Plastered the walls white, inside and out.
I would watch the soldiers go to war, and
The villagers harvest crops,
As I weaved in my room.
I would watch and weave for years
And I would wear a crown of silver,
Because that is what a princess would wear.
I would watch over my father's land from my window in the castle he conquered,
Until I married a clansman and became his queen.
I would heal the sick, aid the poor, and bring food to the hungry.
I would be a quiet queen, because it was my husband's name spoken in the bard's stories.
When my king passed, when I passed, our children and our castle would remain.

If I were a poor girl, facing the famine,
I would dream of living in the castle on the green hill,
Because castles always had plenty of food,
And my family would not be starving.
I would sit at the window and watch the neighbors from afar
As they packed up for America.
I would watch the cows be butchered,

The crops die,
The people leave.
I would watch as my family became the only ones left,
And I would wear a crown of ribbons,
Because for once I wanted some color in my life.
I would watch over the lonely land from the old castle that I loved,
Until my family moved away too.
My brother was sick, my parents were poor, and we were all hungry.
We were going to a land with no ruler, and my name would be lost in the paperwork.
Even when we were in our new land, the castle would remain.

But I am not a fairy queen, or a princess, or even a famine girl.

I am a modern girl, exploring the ruins of a castle on a green hill,
Admiring the history and mystery of it all,
Imagining life here.
I stand by the window and watch the other tourists
As they photograph the ruins.
They look at the ivy,
The remains of white plaster,
And the cows nearby.
I will only be here for a few minutes, but I enjoy the time.
I make myself a crown of flowers,
Because this is a castle, and I want to feel like a princess.
I imagine watching over this land from this old castle that is now in ruins,
And if I were its queen, I would be a fair one.
I would heal the sick, aid the poor, and bring food to the hungry.
I would be a queen so kind that I would be told of in stories,
And so that even when I died, everyone would know it was my castle that now remained.

I imagine being a queen, a princess, or even just a girl living near the castle.
I imagine that a fairy queen would have power to heal the sick.
I imagine that a princess would be able to aid her poor subjects.
I imagine that a girl from the famine years would find a happy home even if it was not here.
But my imagination will not make me one of those women.

My imagination will not heal the sick, aid the poor, or feed the hungry.
My imagination will not make fairies real, princesses independent, or girls safe from famine.
My imagination will not rebuild the ruins of this castle on this lonely old hill.
If I want to be as great as any one of these women, who I know did not live in this castle,
I need to do more than imagine.

So I take one last look from this window,
One last photo, one last memory,
And I take off my flower crown
And leave the castle to remain
For the next girl who imagines.