

Jean Flanagan

By the Sea at Eyeries

County Cork, Ireland

Beyond the sea wall
all that remains of the fishermen
lost at sea
are remnants of their nets
blue, green, and red
and one orange plastic glove.

That morning as the sky started to darken
and the wind smacked against my windows
I searched for Jim's boat entering the bay.
When the clouds finally began to clear away
I cried with the others
by the water's edge
and pressed purple crystal rosaries
between my fingers and thumb
until they broke
and fell
one by one
into the rocky crags.

The Player

She could not listen to one more note.
It rang in her head.
All he could play
was the same haunting melody again and again
on his trombone. She begged
him to perform somewhere else.
"Anywhere," she said.
So he left. He flung his
trombone into the back seat
and drove to the parking garage
where the moon
lights the cement.
He danced near the edge and played the melody.
It seeped
through the empty floors
and echoed like her voice in the night air.

The China Tea Cups

“Are those china cups for sale?” my husband grips
a delicate black cup
in his plump fingers.

I laugh as he holds the cup to the light
examines the detail
along the gold shamrock rim.

He collects china tea cups
imprinted with yellow and red roses
English lanes and gardens, chintz designs
handles too small for a man to hold
yet he does.

I would expect him
to collect sports memorabilia
or beer mugs from pubs.
But he lines the china cabinet
with these small works of art
attending and admiring them
like the children
he never had.

Jean Flanagan is the author of *Ibbetson Street* (Garden Street Press) and *Black Lightning* (Cedar Hill Books). Her work has appeared in numerous publications. She has a new manuscript called *A Hard Winter for Living*. Flanagan teaches in an alternative sentencing program called “Changing Lives Through Literature” and is one of the founders of the Arlington Center for the Arts.