



## Memories of Ireland by Barbara Marangon

Small purple flowers grew wild everywhere on the island, so—wanting to remember I'd been here—I picked some and put them in my handbag. In the distance, I could see the island ferryboat approaching. I stumbled down the hill in panic, but before I made it to the pier, the boat steamed away. As though a great and powerful hand had touched the back of my neck, a voice inside of me said, “Don’t be in a hurry. Let this place enter your soul.”

An oppressive prison of mountains in Italy had once trapped my spirit. Now I studied Ireland’s mountains on the other side of Clew Bay. I could breathe freedom. The challenges had been met and the obstacles stood on the other side of the sea. My family always sought and worshipped the sea, the same body of water that mixed with the ocean and connected the shores of Ireland to America. A drop of this water could travel as far as the Hudson River. But no matter how hard I tried to feel what my ancestors had known in this place they called home, Ireland was a stranger to me. I wasn’t born here. They were. Their story originated here, but mine had begun in New York. The blood of the people who knew and loved this land flowed in my veins, but their memories were not mine, and I couldn’t evoke their sentiments. I understood that wherever you open your eyes and take your first breath, is the place you will always know as

home. Traveling halfway around the world, I had finally found the truth.

It was my last day before heading back to Italy, then to America. I wanted to see the castle that bore our family name. A taxi driver by the name of O’Toole drove me there. We took a bumpy road and arrived at a clearing. The castle stood alone with symmetrical stone walls on a marsh next to a canal that flowed to the open sea. Here was the castle that my grandmother dreamed of, the one in the dream she shared with me. I had arrived in more ways than one, and it had been a long journey. I picked up a stone from the ground in front of the castle and placed it in my pocket. I had taken many detours on the way to finding both this castle and myself. I had made a full circle and returned to my beginning. I had chased my castles in time and found them, but I had really been chasing my dreams, held them, and let them go. But I would carry their memory forever.

My hand grasped the tiny stone in my pocket to remind me that all of this was real.

“I’m ready to go home now,” I said to O’Toole. ✨

**Barbara Marangon** wrote two memoirs, *Detour on an Elephant* and *Chasing Castles*.

“The gift of writing is to be self-forgetful ... to get a surge of inner life or inner supply or unexpected sense of empowerment, to be afloat, to be out of yourself.”

SEAMUS HEANEY

