Christmas in Tazmilly

A small child, perhaps eleven, can be seen sitting by a carved stone on a hill. Sunflowers grow nearby, but they are withering now. For winter approaches, and with it snow. So that is why the flowers are withering. In the meantime, the boy still sits by the carved stone, regardless of the cold. He either doesn’t notice it, or doesn’t care. Whatever the reason, he sits on the small hill and hardly moves. On occasion, a small brown dog will join him on the hill in front of the stone. However, as the weather grows colder, the dog comes less often and will most likely stop in the near future. This is not to say the dog doesn’t care for the child, simply that it wishes to remain warm. After all, it is an animal and, as such, operates primarily on instinct. So the boy sits. He sits as the snow falls down, as the flowers wither and die. What means cold and discomfort to one who is numb? But, let’s not watch him too long, he might shoo us away. Come, let’s see the other people in this small, secluded hamlet.

Ah, I see one now. A young man, maybe in his early twenties. He walks with a limp, and his face is full of sorrow. He fetches a small pail of water from the well in town, and hobbles back to his small house. An older man, around sixty, is waiting in the house. His face shows anger, wrath. Yet, one can’t help but see the tiredness behind the eyes, the fatigue in the old muscles of his face. The limping man draws closer to the house, the pail dripping as he carries it. He cannot help it. Pushing open the old wooden door, he drags the pail inside. The old man’s eyes snap up and he looks over the empty pail. The young man draws back as the old man yells at him. He cowers from the verbal torment, shivering as the old man grabs the pail and strikes him with it. Three hits are given, and then he retreats, leaving the young man to find bandages and cry silently.

A girl, maybe seventeen, stands alone on a worn and weathered battlement of an ancient structure, now long abandoned. She stands and looks out to the stars of the cold night, as if searching for something. She drops her gaze and then proceeds to walk back to a passageway and reenter the battered monument. She walks the long corridors, stopping to evade a animal under the worn carpet. This done, she heads down to a small basement containing a hot spring. Disrobing, she enters the soothing waters and relaxes. Yet, she cries.

A man, in his forties perhaps, searches gulch and mound. High on a wind-swept plateau he calls a name. He waits for reply, and calls again. As the pattern continues, he walks through the crags and spires of the landscape. He passes a broken ledge, with abnormal marks on it, maybe of claws, and stops. He stands there for who knows how long. In his mind, ages. Turning from it he again calls out and waits for the reply he knows will never come.

The small child who sits by the carved stone on the hill now stands up. He calls the dog, who comes after a few minutes. He whispers something to the dog, an gives him a small box. The dog takes the box and runs off. The boy smiles for a second, then resumes his vigil over the carved stone.

The young man hears the older man call his name. Fearing more punishment, he hesitates. Hearing his name called again, this time louder, he obeys. Limping downstairs, he finds the old man with a wrapped package in his hands and a smile on his face. He rushes over to hug the old man, who returns the gesture. The young man then holds up a package of his own. The two smile and share a laugh.

Returning from the hot spring, the girl is called over by an apparition. He says something to her, and slips on a blindfold. He leads her through the broken corridors of the ancient structure, till at last they arrive at a room filed with other ghosts. As one plays the piano, the others reveal a dead pine tree decorated with tinsel and garlands. She smiles, and joins them in their party.

The middle-aged man calls again, and receives no answer. He sighs, and begins again. He then hears the sounds of a collar, and turns to see a dog running up to him, a box attached to it. Kneeling down to pet the dog, he grabs the box and examines it. It is wrapped sloppily in cloth, and has a card atop it. Opening it up he reads the words written upon it:

MERRY CHRISTMAS.