

The Village of Argostoli

Why, years later, with ice covering the grass do I remember again that night in Argostoli when we walked out of the walled garden to listen to the church bells and heard instead sheep bells like rain falling in the fields? This morning, listening to Puccini and watching the red-bellied woodpecker hop up the pine—its cap ablaze with winter fire—I thought of how we stood close in the darkness where the narrow dirt path and the field met; how we leaned against a stone wall and held our breath and listened to the brass bells strapped to the sheep’s necks. That is how we knew how far into the meadows they had roamed. For a long time we paused, and the village dogs began to bark before we saw the low shifting clouds of white and heard the bleating—the bells louder—and the shepherds shouting through the fog, stroking the leaves of the olive trees with their flashlights’ beams. We allowed them that much privacy, for we turned to the sounds of our hiking boots mingling with those of other strangers shuffling along the dusty path that wound to the center of the town. There we sat on the church steps, gazing up at the steeple piercing those empty spaces among the stars and fell asleep waiting for the bells.

— Irene Blair Honeycutt

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