

The Galtee Pines

The Galtee pines stand sentry and guard the beating forest heart, warning of the rivers rush, down the mountainside, where banks crumble under roots, trunks topple, and needles which once could thread the wind, now wait for waters reach, to take them towards the shore.

The Galtee pines tell us hurricanes are coming, when we buy this Galtee land. They say they've been anglicised, from the Irish for mountains of the forest, before they were occupied. We clear a patch, build our home, cyclone-secure, you say. But the Galtee pines say a wooded box can't protect us and beg us to not to stay.

The Galtee pines watch you build a fireplace from red-sandstone and layers of shale. They watch me swim in corries and search for rare artic-alpine plants to draw. They watch me pick mountain sorrel for its bitter-lemon taste and put purple-pink alpine saw-wort in your button-hole and tell you how its name came from the botanist who discovered green plants need carbon dioxide to photosynthesise, like I need you, I say.

The Galtee Pines watch the white orchid elude us like our prey. The Galtee pines watch when I lie about the bramble and holly, where I found a nest with just one egg. The Galtee pines watch you chopping wood, though I tell you I'm not cold. And when you leave with the stream, and I remain, they keep me safe in their roots, buried in the mountain side, under the weeping Galtee pines.