

The Traders

Nora had a dream. She dreamed she was on top of the Reek, dawn was just breaking and she felt like she was on top of the world!

She was standing on a pile of dishevelled stones and faced the sun. The sky stretched as far as the eye could see and Clew Bay was so beautiful. The way that the sun met the deep blue sea and the rocky, jumbled islands of Clew Bay looked like stepping stones she could step on all the way to Heaven.

Nora reached her hands to the sky and grazed her fingertips on the pink candyfloss clouds and felt *amazing*.

Until....

“Arragh Nora! Will ya git up?”

Nora rubbed her eyes to see an angry-looking sister right in front of her and she did not look happy.

She yawned. “What the hell is wrong with ya Mary?” she grouched. “It’s *early!*” Mary sighed and pressed her hand to her much-too creased forehead. “Nora! Do you really not remember? It’s Reek Sunday for God’s sake! We’re to leave after first light! Nora stretched her arms and sat on the edge of the bed. “Well to be honest it’s not *really* my fault. Sure I was out late last night feedin’ the donkeys *and* prepping the sandwiches!” she complained.

“Well just-just get up okay? It’s going to be a long day. I’m going to go get the ass ready.” Mary said with a huff.

“*Grand.*” Her sister stalked out of the room in a mood, leaving Nora alone. She jumped out of bed for there were jobs to be done and there wasn’t a moment to waste.

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Nora walked into the kitchen groggily and took out the auld pot, some oats and Bessie's milk leftover from the day before. Whilst the porridge was cooking she took out the squash and teabags putting them into a large, leather bag along with the sandwiches and several bottles of pop.

She eyed Mary outside the window with her Da, layering the poor auld ass with an assortment of bags and a few rugs.

Nora stepped out the door and onto the dewy lush grass and called out to her Da and Mary, "Porridge is ready!"

"Sound. We'll be in in a minute," came her Da's response. She looked out from the bungalow to the sea. Dawn was nearly breaking and the sun was just rising over Clew bay.

Nora lived in Kilsallagh. She loved where she lived.

In the summertime she walked down to Old Head with her friends and sometimes Mary, and they brought a picnic filled with goodies and bottles of squash. And after that they went for a paddle or bathed on the sand.

And other times - sometimes in spring or winter - Mary and herself went down to rock pools on the far side of the pier and collected limpets for her dinner and sometimes (if she was lucky), she might get some mussels and it was a real treat to get one, or even *two* scallops. But that 'twas *real* rare.

And so, now turning to face the Reek, she realised she looked forward to the climb. Well, the walk *to* the Reek was a burden and the climb, the *climb* was even harder draggin' those two poor auld asses up the hill, *especially* when they were loaded with food and goodies.

But it was worth it when they reached the top, of course.

The view was *spectacular*. You could see *all* of Clew bay if you stood on the right spot (which Nora knew of course), it was right by the edge, though her Dad didn't like her going there.

The wild Atlantic wind would blow behind making her hair slap across her face, making her feel like she got whiplash.

Though she didn't *really* mind. Where the sun met the sea and set glittering diamonds upon it. And made the clear-blue ocean shimmer and look *magical*. And she loved her job at the top, settin' up behind the stall and chattin' with her friends. Keeping up with the local gossip.

Sure that was what being a trader was all about.

The door banged open and Mary and her Da walked through the hall and into the small kitchen, where Mary had set the battered oak table with crockery and a few mismatched bowls paired with spoons.

"Thanks Nora," her Da said gruffly as he and Mary scooped down their porridge, "we're leaving two minutes."

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"Can we stop for a break yet?" Nora complained, "I'm *really* tired. Maybe I should just eat something to take some of the weight off my shoulders." she suggested.

"Come on Nora, we're nearly at the top!" Da said, trying to motivate her.

"Sure we're just on the shoulder!" Mary joined in, feeling tired too.

But Mary and Nora could just about make out the faint white washed walls of the church, peaking out of the fluffy, white clouds. Just then, the church bells rang out for the start of mass.

"Hurry up!" Nora's Da said, nearly running up the rest of the way."

"Yeah, yeah," Mary said.

Then Nora started to run up the hill too, joining her Da as they reached the top of the reek together.

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(Please note: the following story is based on fact, but the characters are entirely made-up. This story is based in the early 1970s.)