

"If I can't take the island with me..."

Silver Arts Literary - Poetry

Betsy Humphreys



Artist: **Betsy Humphreys**
Title: **If I can't take the island with
me ...**
Sub-Category: Poem
Local Game: Unifour Senior Games

“If I can’t take the island with me……” – Cape Breton song lyric

Before I leave, I’ll climb my hill
to rub wild lavender into my hair,
to etch the stormy cove onto my lens,
to stash fresh breeze in my veins.

Before I leave, I’ll join MacNab
for a fast-paced, whiskey-laced ceilidh fest,
the smoky music curling up to heav’n,
our fiddles pulsing Gaelic songs.

Before I leave, I’ll cache wee squawls,
entrust my father’s lore to the eldest bairn.
I’ll memorize young Maggie’s laughing lilt
and trace soft lines on my woman’s face.

And when I leave, my suitcase will near-burst
with scent, with sight, with sound, with sighs.
It will throb with clannish rhyme and chant,
the family bonds that space cannot eclipse.

After I leave, the rocks’ll lie bare,
the rugged coast a parched and salty crust,
the wind whistling hollow, off-key notes,
the lavender all turned to dust.

Till I come home, I'll bear the guilt
of theft compelled by impending grief,
the sin atoned beside a peaty fire
where my lad relights our timeless tales.