

Waiting for Fhlannáin

Florence Toulouse

“But I, being poor, have only
my dreams.

I have spread my dreams
under your feet, tread softly,
because you tread on my
dreams.”

W.B. Yeats

**My gratitude to Asha Kello, my editor,
whose ancestors came from Ireland.
She helped make my dream come
true.**

To Sylvia's soul

Fergal was praying on Flora McVeil's grave in Saint Fhlannáin's cemetery. I was once Flora, his sister, and I was dead. I was now a soul. I waved goodbye to him and tried to touch him lightly. I wanted to let him know that I was still there watching, but he couldn't see me. So I flew away and left him alone.

During my lifetime as Flora, I had heard many people say that Lorras Fhlannáin was a holy land, but I wasn't sure it was true when I first came to live

there. After a while, I became aware of the imprint of the saint on his land. The old chapel of Fhlannáin had fallen into ruin and the only part which remained was a graveyard in which my body had been buried.

It was on a dark misty day. Flora McVeil had died and my soul was attending its own funeral. Everything was grey. The land, the sky and the people were wearing invisible masks.

Now that I was a soul, I felt strange looking at every member of my family. I loved them while I was Flora, and now that I was gone, I still loved them. Most of them were dressed in black trying not to show any emotion. I wished I could comfort them and tell them that I was still among them, but they couldn't hear me now. They were all gathered around my tomb but couldn't see me hovering above Flora's grave.

My brother, Fergal was hiding his tears as he used to hide every kind of emotion. My brother, Brendan was clenching his fists in his pocket trousers. Other members of my tribe were crying. Being a soul now, I was quiet and didn't need to cry. At the end of the celebration, I would fly away for a long journey with Saint Fhlannáin. I had just come to say goodbye to my family and to what used to be my body. I knew that I wasn't attached to it anymore. The priest was

mumbling the gospel, reminding everyone of the fact that human beings were dust returning to the earth from which they were once drawn. I was aware of that when I was Flora, but now he couldn't say that my soul would live forever. I was there watching everything, but like the others, he couldn't see me. Flying over Flora's grave, I had time to study every single face of the McVeil family, and I could see that they were all in mourning.

While I was Flora, I used to be an impetuous woman, very sensitive and idealistic; always fascinated by metaphysical problems that I couldn't solve. I had thought that I would certainly miss the way I used to live as a human being. I would miss the fire I made every morning in wintertime when nobody could go out because of the wind, the rain, the unchained sea and the high tides which licked the shores. I would miss the way I boiled water for the teapot and

prepared scrambled eggs for breakfast. But that wasn't true. Now that I was a soul, it seemed that I didn't miss anything. In a way, I didn't care that I wasn't human anymore. Actually, my soul felt free, safe and peaceful. I was dead as a human being, but my soul was still alive. What used to be my body would rest in the tomb, disintegrate over time, and become completely part of the earth. A new path was offered to me as a soul, and it was an exciting state of

being, a different kind of voyage.

While I was Flora, I believed that I was waiting for Fhlannáin to come and fetch my soul for a long trip over the ocean. Now, I could give evidence that the Saint had woken me up on that very morning just before Fergal came to my bedchamber. There, my brother found a body lying on its bed smiling. For a few seconds, he thought that I was sleeping, but he had

to face the fact that I had passed away during my sleep.

Now that I was a soul, I could see that I was outside my body. I could see a tear rolling slowly down Fergal's cheek as he kissed what used to be my forehead. Silence surrounded us. There was no sign of distress. I could see my corpse left lying on the bed, and the soul I had become was flying over without any pain or sorrow. Body and soul were now apart. I was no longer Flora. I knew that from now on,

the soul I had become would be seen only in people's dreams where I could talk to them. "I will come back in your dreams, my dear Fergal. I will talk to you about the afterlife."

While I was Flora, I felt that the dead were sometimes more alive than the living. I used to think that the dead were talking to me in some way. They made me believe that death was not an end.

Now, I saw that death was only the beginning of the life of the soul. I like the graveyard where

my body lies. It is quiet, peaceful; no one can disturb the feeling of eternity.

Near the cemetery, there is a well. It is Saint Fhlannáin's well. While I was a human being, I used to wash my body with its water; the water was pure, crystal-clear.

After Flora's funeral, my soul flew away. It was so easy to move without a heavy body.

After my death as a human being, my brother Brendan went back to work, working as much as he could to forget the

disturbing thought of death. However, my brother Fergal got completely lost in his thoughts wondering about my death.

As a soul now, I shall say: may Flora's body rest in peace! I am getting used to flying over Flora's tomb. I know her corpse is down in the earth. The McVeils have buried her body in St. Fhlannáin's cemetery according to her last will as a human being.

Now, I will forget that I was once Flora. A soul doesn't need

a body nor care to know to which human being it used to be joined.

While I was Flora and just before my death, I had badly needed strength to go on. Life had become very difficult and I was so tired of living. I was trying deeply to be at peace while waiting for death to come.

Now that I am a soul, I wish to speak to Fergal in his dreams, but it seems that he is scared of my image in his

sleep. Both he and Brendan keep to themselves.

While I was Flora, and my body and my soul were united, I had an idea of my soul. I thought my soul was named Firenze, chosen a thousand years ago by my female ancestors as a Christian name. In my childhood, as Flora, I felt that I was never completely alive. I had to mother my own mother which was an impossible task for a child. My mother was terribly anxious and too young to be a mother.

My father was not an easy man to live with. He fought very hard to survive, and he used to hurt my mother, making me feel truly unsafe. There I stood between them, scared and wondering why life was such a battle. I felt so lonely even among my two brothers. It seemed that there was no one to comfort me. I used to think that I was a foreigner in any kind of human gathering, frightened to communicate with others.

Now, I know that my soul can speak easily to anyone in their dreams.

“Dear Fergal and dear Brendan, I want to tell you that as a soul, it is so easy to fly over Saint Fhlannáin’s land. Would you both listen to me if I told you that the sanctuary of Fhlannáin has to be rebuilt? I am trying to let you know in your dreams that the Saint is coming back to his homeland. The people must get ready to welcome the holy man in a new church.”

This land is wild, beaten by the wind, and the tides have broken the rocks on the shore carrying all kinds of pebbles. Fhlannáin loves it just as it is. My soul likes to come and go in this beautiful landscape. Not because Flora's body is lying there in this beloved country. No, it is because Lorras Fhlannáin is the land of my soul. Souls do care about places. I am no longer torn between two parts, body and soul. I am simply a soul, free to go wherever I want. I can fly

from one land to another. I don't have to carry a body. Now, I have time to talk to Fhlannáin whenever I want and I'm no longer waiting for him; I am with him. Far west, the land is watching the Atlantic Ocean. The sailors are looking for the lighthouse to guide them near the shores of Saint Fhlannáin's land. The soul I have become is a lighthouse for other souls.

While I was Flora, I used to walk near the edge of the peninsula. Sometimes, the

wind lifted me up towards the sky and I felt truly amazed by the beauty of this wild elemental scenery. I wanted to stay there forever but it was impossible. As a human being, I knew that I had to go away.

Now that I am a soul, I can watch the land of Fhlannáin from above. I am glad to see shamrocks in every garden and field. People didn't plant them; they just appeared, carried by the wind. They remind me of my love for Ireland, and I'm

content to see them all around in this emerald country.

“Dear Fergal, when my soul left my body, I was deeply sorry to leave you behind in winter, as I recalled that you had told me that wintertime was quite hard to bear. Now, I don’t mind the cold rain, the wind and the storms. I surely enjoy them as winter has a beauty in itself. Some day beyond the sea, I will wait for you Fergal.” As a soul, I wander the moors in Saint Fhlannáin’s land. Death

doesn't stop me from flying around.

While I was Flora, I used to live with a graveyard inside myself. Death was my country, my landscape and my future. I longed to be a pure spirit, a whisper in the wind. I was tired of bearing the chaos of thoughts within my mind. Anguish tortured me. I wanted my mind at peace. I felt I never really belonged to the material world in which human beings lived. I was a clumsy fool in the world. Most of the time, I stood

back, never completely inside, never completely outside. From where I am now, I know more about life than about death.

“Dear Brendan and Fergal, I’m so glad to hear that you finally decided to rebuild the chapel of Fhlannáin. In this new sanctuary, everyone will worship God and his Saint. I am happy to see that you understand that Lorras Fhlannáin is a very spiritual land.

“Fergal, my brother, while I was Flora, I sometimes felt that I was living in my own shadow. I was bound by the vows I had made years ago to protect and love my family. My heart was circled by a wire netting and a sword was planted deep within it. I found it hard to comfort the weeping girl inside me. She was too burdened to carry on and I wanted to set her free.

“Dear brothers, I am delighted to know that you’re working to rebuild the church

of the holy man. It's great to see that all the people from Lorras Fhlannáin have come to help you in this task. Others may say that you are crazy to do such a thing, but who cares really?"

While I was Flora, the land of my heart was Connemara; my people were those from Lorras Fhlannáin. The land of my soul is still Connemara and I fly around to let you know that the Saint is coming back to his homeland.

“Brendan, Fergal, from where I am now, I can make you see your souls in your dreams. Both of you are ancient knights brought back to life to guide your people and honour through Fhlannáin, the true God. May my prayer awaken you from your long sleep and guide you to build this new church! Don’t be scared, we have known each other for a thousand years. Before Flora’s death, I think you saw as I did the sign of Fhlannáin’s rebirth. The land in which you are

living is the property of the Saint. It is sacred and belongs to everyone. You live life on this land, and then one day, the holy man will come for you as he did for me.

“Have faith while you are rebuilding Saint Fhlannáin’s chapel! Your children may not live there but the sanctuary will remind them of where they came from. Later on, they will understand that in this unpredictable world in which they live, there is a place of

peace and freedom in the land of Fhlannáin.

“My soul can now think quietly about death and tell you what I know. Death is another path to walk. It is easier to accept death if you believe that you have a soul that will live forever. I cannot give you evidence; you must believe me when I tell you in your dreams.”

While I was a human being, I walked hand in hand with death, my true companion which never left me alone.

Shall I say now that it was my best friend? What a friend! One who is severe, cold and tough. How can a human being forget this?

While I was Flora, every time I felt anxious, death reminded me of the fact that it would not come today but tomorrow, which always caused me to worry.

“Dear Fergal, your life, your death, my life, my death, the perfume of the moors, the smell of heathers and grass, the winter flowers, the sea, the

lake, the mountains, and far above in the sky, the face of Fhlannáin smile at you.”

While I was a human, I used to think that I was nothing more than a flower trying to bloom in a wild country; I didn't have to do anything special. I just had to exist, so difficult to blossom and survive in the world.

While I was Flora, I thought that the soul was a veil covering the body, a kind of energy running within me. I wanted a real connection to my

soul, but it was impossible. I had to experience death before I could truly discover that I had a soul. It frightened me, of course because death meant the unknown. But as a human being, the experience of one's soul was just a feeling. It was more of a spiritual than a material thought, without scientific evidence.

As Flora, every time I entered a graveyard, I was aware that the dead were corpses and dust. However, at the same time, I wanted to believe that their

souls still existed elsewhere, that all the souls had joined the infinite universe. Death couldn't be the end in itself, as I was not able to embrace the idea that life meant nothing at all. I was seeking an answer, the source of my restlessness. I wasn't a coward, yet my head was full of anxiety. I was a human being always in mourning. I had to give up my ancient behaviours to fit into the world as it was and not as I wanted it to be. But I was living on the border of mankind's

world and in its invisible space. Now that I am a soul, I have all the answers to the never-ending questions I asked as a human being. I am but one soul in this huge universe, but I have a place. I am at home everywhere I fly.

For instance, I can see that Brendan seems to be very pleased with himself. The walls of the chapel are almost finished. He is looking for a good carpenter to make the roof. He ordered the altar and the stained glass. He knows

that the people from Lorras Fhlannáin will be able to attend the first mass on the 18th of December, the Day of the Saint in the human world. On that day the people will pray as their ancestors did before them in the parish of Saint Fhlannáin.

“Brendan McVeil, they will thank you gratefully for the great things you have done. People helped you rebuild the sanctuary so that everybody could worship the Lord and his Saint.”

Flying over Saint Fhlannáin's land, I pray for the people who are living in this holy country and I can have long talks with Fhlannáin about the soul.

While I was Flora, my mind was never at peace. Every move seemed uncertain and my belief in God was always tested. I wasn't able to easily forgive wickedness in mankind; it was very hard to do so. I had been seeking another kind of humanity. I couldn't be a saint. I was just a simple woman searching for God.

When I thought about the cross that Jesus Christ carried, it felt like a dagger in my heart and caused me great sadness. I wasn't able to follow Christ who could truly forgive his enemies. He was always ready to pray to God for those who had hurt him. But I was not. I needed time to forgive. I knew forgiveness was the path to peace and love. I didn't want to keep the imprint of hatred on what I imagined was my soul. Love endured in my wounded heart. I was not a mystic, I was

not a hermit, nor was I a soldier of God. I was only a woman waiting for Fhlannáin.

While I was Flora, I used to visit the cemetery of my ancestors twice a year. Looking at their tombs, I felt that they were not there anymore. It was a disturbing thought. I had no certitude at all, but I wanted to believe their souls surrounded and protected me. Of course, it was just a feeling, but I couldn't get it out of my mind. It seemed to be carved in me before I knew

anything of my soul. In truth, I always felt my soul but hadn't any knowledge of it. Sometimes, I was paralysed with anxiety over this thought. I couldn't sit down and relax. My family thought I was tormented by what was invisible and indescribable. They couldn't understand the anguish that tore my heart apart. I didn't want to let them know that being in the world meant suffering for me. I felt as though I was carrying a heavy cross on my shoulders. I was

constantly awaiting the grim reaper and I had to deal with death. Sometimes I thought I felt I carried the burden of suffering for my ancestors. It seemed they had chosen me to be in charge of their pasts. I had inherited their dreams and their weaknesses. My poor head was filled with complaints and crying. They all wanted to tell me their stories. The truth was that I always failed to satisfy them. They made me look through the looking glass to

face death. Misunderstanding
was my fate.

Deep inside
I was never at peace
Deep inside
I was *inquiries*
Deep inside
The dead were too noisy
Deep inside
The alive were unreal
Deep inside
I knew I had to die
Deep inside
I wished I had a soul

As a human being, I was scared of dying. I had hoped I would be able to pray to God in the few seconds before my death. I wanted to be well-prepared to die, with a mass in a chapel with those who would attend my funeral. I knew that my soul would want to hear the *Pie Jesu* from Gabriel Fauré, the *Ave Maria* from Schubert, the *Lux Aeterna* from Elgar, and the gospel from Saint John: “I’m the way, the truth and life.” Finally, I wanted to be buried in Saint Fhlannáin’s

cemetery. I would be content for my body to lie down nearby the little lake where the water lilies spring in July and where the yellow irises bloom. I hoped that my soul would be purified in Saint Fhlannáin's well, ready to face the holy man.

Now that I am a soul, I can see that the funeral I had planned during my lifetime as Flora went on as I had wished, according to my will. The soul I had become heard the mass that I had desired.

“Dear Fergal, while I was Flora, I felt that you were more than a brother to me. I thought that you were a brotherly soul; I just needed to know that you were living somewhere on earth as a human. Your life was in Lorras Fhlannáin while mine had been away for a long time. Yet I believed then that the land of my soul was Lorras Fhlannáin. When I returned to this peninsula as Flora, I felt that I was more alive than ever. There I found a genuine life.”

While I was Flora, I could sense that someone was dying and someone was born into the human world every day, every hour, every minute and nearly every second. This never-ending circle of life and death expressed mankind's condition on earth.

As Flora, I struggled to live every day. I saw people ready to do anything to survive, even killing each other if they felt it was necessary.

As Flora, I knew that in western civilization, people

usually died and were born in hospitals. I found them to be a very unnatural place to die or be born. All those long corridors, protected rooms, unique smells of the medical world were hard to bear. A hospital was a labyrinth where one could easily lose one's way without finding the exit. The hospital was the place where I could feel death very close to me. At that time, I thought death was a strong word, like flesh, which I used to spell with a capital *D*, a little *e*, a strong *A*

and a poisoning snake as *th* which gave me the creeps. I read daily in the newspapers that Mister Smith had died, but who truly cared except his family? Mary was born, but who cared except for her parents? I knew of course that no one would die for me when my time came. I would die alone.

“Once, while I was Flora, I had asked you, my dear Fergal, what you thought about death. You had answered me that death cut heads like a

guillotine. Death was an appointment settled before birth. Death was a frightening vision of the future. Death was the end of all time. Death was a path to eternal light. And finally, you told me that you believed that death was a strict teacher who could tell you how to live on earth.”

While I was a human, I imagined that I would die at fifty, sixty, or at seventy...it was getting harder to see if I would live past eighty, and I was quite sure that I would not

live to be a hundred. The truth is that Flora died at the age of seventy-seven years old. Nobody could have foreseen the age of her death. No one knows when death comes, fortunately, because humans would be paralysed by anxiety if they knew the day, the hour or the minute of their death.

While I was Flora, I wished that I never thought about my future death. Most of the people I knew cherished their lives even when they were deathly ill. But I wasn't. On

earth, I knew that most human beings sought material goods like money and power to keep death away from them. But again, I didn't. I had always wished then that we could live like a flower or a butterfly, a simpler life. I found wisdom in the way butterflies and flowers lived. Sometimes I wondered whether a short life of health would be easier to live than a long life of sickness. As Flora, I knew that life was a fight to preserve oneself against death, a losing battle that one day

would surely destroy my body. Most of my life, I couldn't understand why human beings cared so much about money, property and power. People seemed to be living in the dark ages like prehistoric men. Man was the worst predator in nature, and I didn't want to be a killer.

“Dear Fergal, now that I am a soul, I ask you in your dreams if, like most people, you try to avoid the question of death?”

While I was Flora, I couldn't avoid this question and was

always wondering whom I would be willing to die for.

To give one's life for the people one loved was certainly the best way to die, but I didn't die like that. I died in my bed, with nobody beside me but Fhlannáin. As a human being, I wanted to follow the path of Fhlannáin, but I always failed. I was condemned to be mediocre, a hard fact to face. When I thought of how I could better myself, I would refer to Jesus Christ as the best leader of humanity for mankind.

“Dear Fergal, you’re so lucky to live in Lorras Fhlannáin. You can’t see it clearly yet, but the Saint himself is your guide. You may not understand it right now, but the land needs its protector.” The spirit of the holy man dwells on the moors. It is there in the ocean. It breathes in the sky. Everywhere, the holy soul shows its strength, even when the sun is setting in the western horizon on the peninsula. There you can feel the gentle touch of Fhlannáin.

While I was Flora, I didn't want to own any of the land of Fhlannáin. I simply wanted to come back over and over until my body could rest in Saint Fhlannáin's cemetery.

Throughout Ireland, churches are dedicated to saints. While I was Flora, I thought that every human being had to go to the emerald country to learn the ways of the saints. I wished that Fhlannáin could help me follow his path and teach me how to become patient and more human.

Now that I am a soul, I want to fly over the altar in the newly built sanctuary of Fhlannáin.

“So far away from you and yet so close, Fergal, I am no longer waiting for Fhlannáin to come. I am with him on a very long journey. He heard my prayer and came to fetch me for an endless voyage.”

Now, my soul no longer has to pray for a true brotherhood in the land of the Saint. I can see all the souls living in harmony in the huge universe.

Sometimes now my soul, goes to visit a friend I knew while I was Flora. She is sick and fighting for her life. She is weak and she feels lonely. Though she hopes to be cured, she has to confront death. I would like to comfort her in her dreams where she can see me now. Words of compassion are not enough, yet silence is too heavy. I see her lying on her bed, fragile, frightened to die. I try to tell her that death is not an end. It is only the beginning of the life of the soul.

“Fergal my brother, while I was Flora, I often looked at a picture of us when we were kids. You were tall, a bit clumsy, but so alive. Now that I am a soul, when I look at you, you are not so alive. You wear a mask of politeness. While it’s certainly important to play your part in society, I can tell you now that our souls wear no mask.”

From where I am, I can see my friend Sylvia dying; she wears no mask. She doesn’t complain. She keeps to herself.

While I am beside her bed, invisible to her eyes, I see in her face the fragility of mankind. Death is coming for her. Through her face, I'm looking at her soul, and I see that it is a good soul. I know that she will die alone, her husband is gone, her daughter is abroad and her son is anxious and very unhappy. Nothing of her human past is really important now. What is important is that my soul is with her, even if she cannot see me. I'm trying to smile at her. I

will help her to cross between life and death.

Just like that, without warning, Sylvia was dead as a human being. Her body was cremated, according to her will. Her children are in mourning.

Now that she is a soul, we are again united, and I know that she will come back in her children's dreams to guide them through life.

While I was Flora, I couldn't avoid the idea of death. When I used to pray to the Lord, I was

trying to comfort myself with prayer, but I knew that I was dying. Sometimes, I wished that I could quit life for a moment. Perhaps I didn't live at all or more exactly, I didn't know how to live. The longer I lived, the more I learned to lose: people, things, dreams, and my beliefs. I was conscious that time passing brought me closer to death. I was looking for peace, the same peace that Jesus Christ had given his apostles before he died.

“Dear Fhlannáin, as a human being, I was often angry with myself. There was a violence within me that I couldn’t tame, a monster living deep inside me. I didn’t know what to do about it. Something in me was terribly wild. So I used to pray to the Lord to help me change my anger into love.”

While I was Flora, I always returned to Ireland in my dreams. My love for this country seemed to me so ancient. I didn’t choose Ireland to be my soul’s homeland.

Ireland chose me to be one of its children. Blessed are the people from Lorras Fhlannáin and blessed am I because I feel at home there. It took many years to realize that I've been away too long.

I now know that I can spend time in Ireland whenever I want.

“Dear Fergal, we will meet again in this emerald country when Fhlannáin comes for you. Be blessed and wait for me in the island of all the Saints. May

the spirit of Fhlannáin bring you mercy and tranquillity!”

In his dreams, Brendan called for me to tell me he was arranging details for the 18th of December with the priest in the new sanctuary of Fhlannáin. I told him that Saint Fhlannáin was on his way to the new chapel and that the people from Lorras Fhlannáin must be prepared to greet him in his church. I helped him see that his faith was his strength that the sun shines in the depths of a human being. It goes deep

inside and enlightens what is dark and hateful. Darkness calls for light even if it is difficult to see it. Every wound of mankind needs light, the light of the Son of God.

While I was Flora, I was sometimes a hermit who enlightened his path with a torch. I often walked in a dark tunnel while truly believing that I would find my way out into the bright sky, and my heart could greet the sun.

Now that I am a soul, I can say that darkness is not so dark.

There is light in a place where obscurity appears to be everywhere.

As Flora, I used to say to every human being: “Don’t try to make me distressed. I will not listen to you. I don’t care about your power, money and properties. I am looking for peace and grace. I am always connected with what is invisible.”

I felt deeply that I had memories of an ancient past.

“Now as a soul, I know that you are a brotherly soul,

Fergal. I am so glad to see that you are living in Lorras Fhlannáin. Fergal, Flora, and Fhlannáin are three Christian names which begin with the letter *F* which is a very unbalanced sign. It is also the beginning of 'fool.' Maybe, I was a fool, maybe you are too, and maybe Fhlannáin was a greater fool than us. All the people on earth are wearing masks to disguise themselves from the perfect people they would like to be. They are actors playing on the stage of

life. But as a fool, I can be unconventional and talk without being careful of what I say, wearing no mask through life.”

While I was Flora, I didn't even know that it was necessary to protect oneself in our human life.

“Dear Brendan, dear Fergal, now that I am a soul, I am with you praying to Fhlannáin in the newly built church. Sometimes, I fly over Flora's tomb in the graveyard of Saint Fhlannáin. I care deeply about

this cemetery. I was and I still am a member of the McVeils' clan. I am forever a brother soul to you Fergal, Brendan and we'll meet again quite soon.

“Dear Fergal, I know that we souls are connected. Now, I can see you as you really are even if deep inside, you believe your secret is well kept. I know your soul, and your soul is truly what you are forever. As a man, you may feel lonely. Sleeping too much, you seem to be just a shadow of yourself.

If my love could awaken you, I'd be happy to hear your voice. Nearby, the ocean, and high in the sky, my soul is flying over you. Gentle and tender, I am now at peace with humanity.

“Dear Fergal, I know you won't say anything about what I have just told you and it doesn't matter anyway. I am the soul who needs to speak: speaking of love, speaking of death, speaking of faith, speaking to Fhlannáin. I am the one who fell in love with the

land and the people from Lorras Fhlannáin.”

While I was Flora, I often wondered if I could experience my soul through my feelings and emotions. I felt I could but didn't have any proof of the existence of my soul, just a feeling.

Now, I know that I am an old soul and will never again be a human being.

As Flora, it was necessary to keep my feet on the ground. I had to deal with the material world in which I was living.

Little by little, I learned how to be the soul I have always been. Most of the time, I thought that I was enslaved to land, home, and work, but I couldn't help but wonder if I were truly alive doing so many things. The material world was not enough for me to live in; I felt I was never part of it. I didn't know exactly how to express what my soul had always been. It was hard for me to make my way in such a world. I had to learn how to become incarnate in a material world while I had

a body, keeping in mind that I was also a soul.

“Now that I am just a soul, I can talk to you my brother Fergal about Saint Fhlannáin. He loved then and still loves now his land and the people who are and have been living there. Once, he was a pillar of the church. Before being a bishop, he was a monk and a scholar. His relics are kept in the Cathedral of Killaloe. He chose the district of Lorras Fhlannáin to preach the gospel to farmers who lived there

thirteen centuries ago. After some time, he decided to build a sanctuary near the lake, inside the peninsula. People came there to pray to God as long as the chapel was there. They were also buried around the sanctuary. When the church was destroyed, the graveyard remained, and people kept the memory of the ancient chapel alive.

“Dear Fergal, you look so sad. As a soul, I see now that

November is never an easy
month for you.

November in ashes, you are
distressed.

November of the dead, you
have memories.

November, you're scared, you
are tormented.

November, you'll die, your
soul will survive.

“My dear brother, while I was
Flora, I used to pray the ‘Our
Father’ to the Lord, the prayer
Jesus left to mankind. It was so
hard to follow his path. It was

easier to act according to ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ Then sometimes, the dreadful idea of revenge was in my mind and it darkened my heart. I knew there was no other solution than forgiveness. I had to forget my wounds to love people. In a way, to be good was to be on the side of those who accepted their humanity. Wherever I went, I could feel the difference between me and others. I was scared of what mankind could do and I was so

frightened to be wounded. Sometimes, I felt I was like a little deer trying to escape the hunters. I prayed to Fhlannáin to help me stand tall and I wished he would hear me.

“Dear Fhlannáin, now that I am a soul, I can see that you helped me find my own way in the world. I am less a stranger to myself and to any soul.”

While I was a human being, life was such a struggle, but I was a warrior without any weapon. I wore no mask and no armour. I chased my ghosts. I

didn't compromise with them. I fought with what I was and then I died. Every time I needed the approval of others, I made myself unbalanced. Little by little, I was proud to be one of the McVeil's tribe. I felt I was a true McVeil deep in my soul.

“Dear Fhlannáin, you made me feel that I had won the dignity to follow the motto, *Virtutis Gloria Merces.*”

Every 18th of December from now on, all the people from Lorras Fhlannáin will be

gathered around the altar in the new church. Flying over Saint Fhlannáin's land, I'm glad to see Fhlannáin's sanctuary. It has been rebuilt, stone by stone. My soul has always been my guide. What was veiled is now unveiled. I was once a human being who has died. Now, I am forever *my* soul flying over Lorras Fhlannáin.

**Epitaph of Flora McVeil in
Saint Fhlannáin's cemetery**

1965-2042

“Walk among long dappled
grass
And pluck till time and times
are gone
The silver apples of the moon
The golden apples of the sun.”

W.B. Yeats