

## JANNETT

By Ann Thompson

In this hard-scrabble place  
Cradled among rolling hills  
Of spruce and maple  
So close together  
The sun struggled to melt  
The snow and ice - you were born.  
Wild and free  
You roamed the Mountain forests  
Barefoot.  
Speaking softly your father's tongue,  
Words carried from a faraway place.

Existing.  
Living securely among kin.  
Bending, lifting, digging,  
Always hungry,  
Starving with a gnawing in your belly.  
Cold, ragged and dirty  
You grew anyway.  
Despite this place,  
You survived.

And one night, under a full moon,  
Yellow-lit lanterns swinging,  
In the cool evening breeze,

You walked your people down the Mountain.  
Like fireflies, you floated down  
To the good, sweet earth below.  
Singing as you stepped,  
Walking, shoeless, to meet the future.

You were courted and married late  
A farmer who owned fertile land  
In the Valley.  
Owned machinery, cattle, a clapboard house,  
And later,  
Extra cream.  
The extra cream waited in shining cans  
At the end of the newly gravelled driveway,  
Was picked up and rushed to the City,  
Returning in small glass bottles on your doorstep.

Later, you packed the lanterns away,  
And watched the light bulb  
Swinging in isolation from its cord.  
It threw a dim, cold light  
You half-admired.

You flourished.  
Grown children left and returned,  
Left and returned,  
Pounding a rhythm of life here.  
The trees pushed back,

Leaving neatly ploughed land  
And meadows.  
You planted flowers  
To place in glass jars on your table  
Dressed with a soft cloth you wove  
In your spare time.

The fiddles lurched  
And your feet stomped  
To the old tunes and new.  
You loaded up the back of the pickup  
With friends and kin,  
Left your Gaelic behind,  
Visited other places to spend time once so scarce,  
But now it floated above the night.

When he died you sold the farm,  
Machinery and land.  
You stayed the house.  
No son or daughter returned.  
Four-lane highways  
Pulled them to gather,  
In the company of strangers,  
Amounts of silver and  
A longing for escape from  
Their mind-numbing, mind-bending work  
Of gathering for Things.

Leaving a gnawing hunger  
For something more.  
They came to visit  
Now and again,  
Dragging sullen children,  
Red-eyed from watching  
The world on a screen.  
Hands soft and white,  
Unable to wield an axe  
To keep themselves warm.

But now you sit. A spectator.  
Looking back on your work and life,  
Able to see that  
Their dreams were not your dreams,  
And able to gather in the changes.  
You are content.  
You know your journey was rooted  
In the necessity of time  
And it was good.  
And yet,  
You do not give up hope  
That one of your blood  
Will return to the land and begin again  
A life of meaning  
In this hard-scrabble place  
Called Home.

For insertion in the book Middle River – History of a Cape Breton Community at page 30.

Instructions:

Print Page 1 of this 2-page document on one side of a blank sheet of 8 ½" x 11" paper.

Print Page 2 on the reverse side of the same sheet (or, alternatively, print them on two separate sheets).

Crop the sheet(s) to fit inside the book: Cropping approx. 5 ½" from the top edge and 8 ¼" from the left edge of Side 1 will produce a page that is a bit smaller than the outside dimensions of the book.

A single small dab of glue applied with a toothpick to the angle between pages 30 and 31 can be used to anchor the insert.