

And there are Pansies; that's for Thoughts

(Ophelia, *Hamlet*, Act 4, Scene 5)

On the last day of the world,
You will find me kneeling,
Weeding the garden. Gloves off
Digging deep into the earth.
Cuticles and nails creamed
Black with loam. Savouring
the aroma of peat;
I thank the earthworms.

On the last day of the world,
I deadhead the peonies.
The new blooms blowsy. Double cream petals
Freed from the burden of weary buds,
Waggle to the onshore susurrations of
Waves patiently lashing stone.
Inhaling deep into the ruffles,
From the pink core appears an ant.
A Visitation. An invocation.
I am no longer alone.

Weary arms rest on the garden gate
Absorbing the peace on the wind. Allowing
Its caress to cool her mind while
Observing my progress.
The garden gate squeaks.
Ophelia, my helpmeet, enters.
Adorned not in sodden velvet gown, but
Simple trousers and worn plaid shirt.
She unfurls her quilt. It ripples tossing
Pansies for thought. She says.

My unrestrained garden
Is shamed by the mathematical
Precision of her quilt.
A floral contradiction: a prayer perhaps.
For what is praying, but a contradiction for those who
do not, like me, believe.

What came first? The garden; the quilt; You or I?
Love came first. She says, sinking
Down on the chair, bought
At an auction in a town
No longer there. Yet the quilt
Endures; And the maker outlasts
The constraints of time and memory.

Old towns, quilts, gardens,
Ophelia's pansies of thought,
You and I are complicated.
Shrouded in countless stories, untold hours
With needle, thread, and cloth.
Winter labour while planning for
Summer; as the snow melts
The garden is no longer still.
We shovel earth, and awaken
The hands of summer.

On the last day of the world,
I suggest to Ophelia:
Consider the pole beans; reaching
Higher for the sun. I share
Unthinkable tales of humans always
Reaching till the clouds shred.
A crack startles. Silence.
Victims of our aspirations.

Ophelia laughs; a little madly.
The pole beans have no aspirations;
Except to be eaten.

Its good to laugh, even madly,
Best not to weep when plastic
Flowers adorn the dead. Quilts
Disguised as comforters hide in
Discount bins. No longer needed for warmth.
Nor survival of harsh winters.

On the last day of the world,
Ophelia tosses tiny violets
Sweet and fragrant to charm
Melancholy spirits.
The murmuring of birdsong returns.
The *put put put* of a motor on the Bay
Pulsates in our fingers.
The fabric of everyday life whispers
We are bound.
We are wrapped in a garden.
Roots and blooms;
Cloth and thread.

Tendrils of ivy, created in cotton, enclose us.
The leaves of green reach out to reassure the beans.
Ophelia's azure pansies sooth. The bees
Intent once more on gathering pollen
Roll in tipsy circles.
A clap of fairy thunder invites
All and sundry to sip from
The deadly foxglove
flute of heartsease.

The corners of the quilt lift;
The breeze ruffles our hair.
A caress as fingers mingle, and gently
Settle frayed borders; exquisite
Worn and crooked needle fingers.
Green fingers. Loved fingers.

Yes, quilts, and disheveled gardens, are complicated.
They endure in a world when so much is fleeting.
A love story in cloth and thread; in blossoms
Inviting us in to a Garden once lost. Reminding us.
We can escape despair. Even as we cross
The passage into death
We endure, we outlast,
 The last day of the world.

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