

Audrey Molloy

**THE  
IMPORTANT  
THINGS**



Gallery Books

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*in memory of my mother, Iris*

## *Envy Is a Day Lily*

At the end of the street  
behind the supermarket  
where pretty houses peter out,  
there's yours.

Broadleaf weeds  
outside the torn fly-screen  
where a Cavalier King Charles  
eyes you, head to one side.

You can't answer his question,  
but know this: someone  
once looked upon your life  
and wished it were theirs.

## *How I Knew It Was a Dream*

The day was strange from the start.  
Small things, like the way the grass  
leaned towards the dying moon

or the air lifted the table linen.  
The eggs, when rapped lightly on the bowl,  
rapped back, and this went on, back

and forth, until I tucked  
them in the warm cleft of my breast,  
where they sang like happy kettles.

The solemn badger in the hallway  
held my Barbour coat as I slipped it on.  
A strange day, I tell you.

People were talking in the street  
and on the train, heads thrown back  
to laugh at nothing. No one wore a mask.

I accepted all this as a marvellous  
run of coincidence. That is until  
I saw you waving from your car.

I looked around but I was alone,  
unmistakable in my velvet cloche,  
quilted coat and button-sided boots,

and you, beaming like a man who's spied  
a special friend he hasn't seen for years,  
not the woman who was once his wife.

## *The Important Things*

*i.m. Marianne Ihlen*

There's a word in Scots Gaelic — *sgrìob* —  
which refers to the tingle on the upper lip  
just before you take a sip of whisky.  
We are talking — after the burial,  
now they've allowed funerals again —  
across a table no bigger than a dinner plate  
about those we've lost to the virus,  
and *whisky* or *whiskey* — the important things —  
when Roy Buchanan comes on the jukebox  
and I can almost taste the light  
film of sweat on your skin.  
I should have known it right then:  
an inventor will always be curious,  
and that here, in this bar, months from now,  
you will sit in false darkness  
with another muse,  
while on our white-board veranda,  
its double swing written by Harper Lee,  
I'll dip my best bristle brush  
in tin after tin of green —  
viridian, sap, olive, emerald —  
and slap paint mixed with salt onto timber shades  
until every trace of off-white is erased.  
I'll forgive you, in time, everything  
but the way you changed my name  
in the song that made you famous,  
trimming a syllable to rhyme with *began*;  
the irony of that, since it was the end,  
and not even our story,  
though all unhappy stories resemble each other.  
But let's not catastrophize,  
we haven't yet begun, and right here, right now,  
in The Fiddler's Arms,

there's a feeling coming over me,  
a surface tension close to my upper lip,  
that no English word can describe.