

## *East of My Birth*

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Even in their homes, the island villagers sometimes had to raise voices to be heard over pounding waves of the Atlantic. "It feeds and kills us," called an old man who no longer fished, in their fireplace smell of burning turf to his wife mending socks by a crucifix. She said, "I hear in it my da's anger, and his da's. That once again no boats could go –" "Me, I hear the war." She looked at the fire's shifting glow on his face. "Between God and man," he told her. She made a cross by her heart. "I hear a fool again talking more sin than he's stored up good deeds against." He smiled his dozen teeth, announced, "I hear all the priests in Ireland farting." She gazed. "All the nuns..." he said, and she clasped hands over ears. He kept moving his mouth but to no words. As his wife lowered the hands, her eyes changed. "What?" she said. "Aw, just flushing toilets." The two laughed: and outside, the storm's howls seemed mirth.