



Bounty

by Margaret Chula

Kyoto, 1985

After today's sweeping, I admire my efforts—the soft green moss, crisp ferns, morning glory vine released from its trellis, green seedpods turning to brown, their seeds gathered in an empty mustard jar for next year's crop.

Earlier I harvested the basil, picking off small yellow worms and their sticky egg nests. When it began to sprinkle, I took shelter on the veranda, sitting up straight to make the long task easier. This wasn't how I imagined spending the day, basking in the warm sun, humming—yet there is Arthur Rubenstein playing piano, so beautifully. I clip the fragrant basil in rhythm. A bullfrog joins in; another answers. In the distance, the click, click, click of a farmer's shovel.

I combine the fresh basil, garlic, and pine nuts—the whirr of the blender uniting the flavors. Relaxing with a cup of green tea, I sit on the tatami in front of the open shoji wearing a shawl, hat, and fur-lined jacket on my lap. It has become cold, the air fresh. Cedar mingles with blossoms of the fragrant olive, a heady late afternoon drug.

yellow leaves fall
on the newly swept moss
stone Buddha still smiling

image info