

**Bourne**  
**toWrite...**  
creative writing  
workshops

## Fraud

by Des Holden

The facts as far as could be ascertained were as follows.

One. They were both alive a week earlier, at Sunday service. The choir regulars remembered her singing. He had taken the collection. Margaret Thompsett in the second row had noticed creases in his new shirt. She had also helpfully noticed his cufflinks. Racing cars she thought.

Two. The bodies lay in fridges 4 and 5c in the county hospital. On a flight they would have been on the aisle, him looking at the back of her head. Low numbers, business class. Extra leg room, extra wine or gin. DS Jones had never travelled business class. In fact, and he didn't count it as fact three, more like fact 2b, sandwiched between the window and the aisle, he'd only been on a plane twice. He'd sat at the back, by the toilets. Here 4 and 5c lay side by side.

Three. The bodies had been recovered by the coastguard three days ago. He opened fridge doors and pulled the trolleys out. Now they lay naked, but when found he was wearing a suit, grey, his white shirt cuffs held in place by silver 1960s Grand Prix cars. She was wearing blue, a dress, her only jewellery a plain wedding band. They had been lying together on the rocks as planned. Handcuffs joined his left and her right wrists together.

DS Jones pushed the trays back into the darkness. Lie flat beds. The doors closed heavily, the bodies completely gone as though the space they had occupied had never been. He walked out of the mortuary on to Eastern Road. Weak February sunshine dazzled him.

Four. Marjorie and Graham Smith, members of St Finnian's Church, sometime members of the local writing group, volunteers at the Oxfam book shop on Grove Road had dined together at Little Elephant on Valentines Day. Two days before their wedding anniversary.

Five. Reverend Mearns had identified the couple. Jones had looked at the purple-grey, broken faces and wondered how anyone could be sure. Really sure.

He leant on the black iron College fence and took his cigarettes from his coat pocket. He blew smoke into afternoon air colder than the morgue. Students wandered past and ignored him. A teacher stared and sniffed. He pushed off the fence and walked towards the sea.

Six. The handcuffs, he was told, were sixteenth century. European. Rare. Very rare and very valuable.

Seven. The bodies bore identical tattoos, covering their backs and their hearts. The pathologist, interested in body art, reported various cultures but a common theme. Protection. Unlike the cuffs they were recent. Brand new.

He leaned on the pale green railings. A few people walked the shingle and a skeletal nudist tip-toed to the water, ignored by everyone.

Eight. Their daughter had come straight from Heathrow that morning. Grace, unknown at St Finnians, and at the Oxfam shop. Grace, who hadn't seen her parents for more than ten years. Grace who stated with absolute certainty the couple were not Marjorie and Graham.

Nine. Lie flat, flat lie stories.