

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Fraud

by Mary Brannigan

The facts, as far as they could be ascertained, were as follows. The woman suddenly appeared in the parish. She was a devout Catholic and attended mass daily. At first the priest thought she must be a visitor. But no, as they chatted one morning after the service it transpired they'd recently moved from an adjacent parish. Kate Reilly and her husband Owen had emigrated to Boston from Ireland a few years ago. As the months passed and Father Kenny continued to chat to Kate he realised her previous parish priest was a friend of his with whom he maintained close links.

As he got to know Mrs Reilly better he broached the subject of Children. "I Can't have children Father" she said. "What a pity" came his reply. " I don't suppose you'd think of adopting. We have a baby girl in need of a good home like yours". The seed was planted and shortly after, the woman said she and Owen would be willing to adopt. The child was duly placed with them and they christened her Nora.

The first year passed and all worked out well. The baby became a healthy toddler and then at the age of four started at the parish convent school. The father, it turned out, was a bit of a drinker and Kate was glad of the lively company during the lonely hours Owen spent in the pub. When Nora reached the age of eight her mother began to think the child reminded her of someone, but she couldn't think who. Time went by till, when Nora was twelve, an urgent phone call came to say the paternal grandfather was gravely ill and wished to see his son.

The little family flew to Ireland to say their goodbyes to the old man. He remained conscious just long enough to greet them. The wake was attended by friends and family from far and wide.

During the course of this the child sat by her granny's side and as Kate watched them, the penny dropped with a sickening clang. The child was the image of the old lady. After the funeral Nora, who knew she'd been adopted, suddenly asked her mother why she looked just like granny Reilly. Answer came there none.

The family returned to Boston and nothing more was said on the subject. The only difference was that the mother had begun to demean Nora on a daily basis. Finally, at the age of eighteen, the girl decided to leave home. As she closed the door for the last time she knew that her whole life had been built on a lie.