

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

## Inheritance

by Mary Brannigan

It's perfectly formed, just as it was when grandma received it. Now it was Jean's turn to take custody of the doll that always passed from grandmother to granddaughter on her twenty first birthday. No one knew how the tradition started nor why the doll was never shown to the recipient till the actual birthday. That was the first time Jean laid eyes on it. It was an exact replica of a ballerina caught dancing en point.

From the elegant head to dainty feet encased in exquisitely made shoes, every detail seemed to have been taken from a real ballerina and reduced to miniature proportions. As Jean accepted the doll, she knew it came with a bit of a bad reputation. The story went that each person who inherited it had soon after suffered some kind of bad luck.

The great great grandmother had been engaged to marry when the doll came to her. But shortly afterwards her fiancé was killed in a hunting accident. It had, apparently, taken her years to recover before meeting the man who ultimately became her husband. Since then things had gone smoothly and she lived a long and happy life.

When Jean's grandmother, in turn, took ownership she put the story down to superstition and vowed to cherish her inheritance. She had no reason to change her mind till a year later, when she broke both legs in a car crash, putting an end to her fledgling career as an ice skater.

Now as Jean placed the doll on a shelf in her bedroom, she wondered if there was anything to the family legend. When two years had passed and all was well in her life, she quite forgot about it. Her career as a lawyer was going well and she was happy with her boyfriend.

Jean and Phillip were keen travellers and often went on adventure holidays. Their latest was an African safari and they set off one fine day in October.

Their destination was Kenya and they were enjoying being close to the magnificent wild animals. Jean was a keen photographer and while trying for a close up of a lion, the animal charged. Before the gamekeeper shot the beast, it had bitten off Jean's foot. She was taken to the local hospital and then home to recover.

When she finally came to terms with her disability and married Phillip, she took the doll into the garden and set light to it. No grandchild of hers would have it.

Years later, when she was quite old, Jean came across a family history written in the previous century. It seems that in eighteen hundred an ancestor named Sofia, a ballerina, had been brutally murdered on her twenty first birthday.