

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Dorothy

by Victoria Cooper

In the last year before my mother's death my Aunt Vi moved in to take care of her. I hadn't spoken to my mother for several years, so it was only when my Aunt wrote to invite me to stay with her in Andover that I learnt of her death.

My mother's bedroom was overly warm and there was a sickly rose tint filtering through the curtains that emphasised the lingering smell of lavender.

The nurse's silver belt buckle lay on the candlewick bedspread like a pulled tooth.

Beside it, lay a torch, a large magnifying glass and various other times of beloved insignificance.

My fingers grazed over them like a damsel fly, hovering above the bone shoe horn, the broken spectacle case and the pile of Mills and Boon with folded down corners.

"You still going through all that rubbish?" said my aunt piercing through the stuffy atmosphere without me even noticing.

I ignored the question, "it's not rubbish, they're Mum's things," but too late the tremble had caught in my voice revealing the very hurt I wished to conceal.

I picked up a small battered prayer book, inside it read, "To my dearest Dorothy, your loving Father, April 1928."

Looking up I asked, "do you have one like this, from your Dad?"

Her poker back flinched and the tree of lines grew across her forehead in thought, "he wasn't her father, not her real father."

She threw the words down on the bed along with the bric-a-brac. I stared at her. And in that moment, everything I knew to be true about myself up until then was gone.

“Born on the wrong side of the blanket, that’s what they used to call it,” said my Aunt.

My fingers returned to the belt buckle, trying to anchor myself to something solid, something familiar.

“She never even knew her own Dad, poor cow.”