Bourne toWrite…
creative writing workshops

Prologue

by Liz Rider

Karen sat in her motorised chair and using the controls, put her feet up and reclined. She shut her eyes and began to drift off when a sudden sharp pain stabbed at her fingers making her wince. As the pain subsided and Karen settled again, she recalled the time in her early thirties when she had been diagnosed with genetic Arthritis and had been requested to complete a medical history form. How strange it is, she thought, how such routine events give rise to such momentous decisions. Who would have thought that completing a form would change my life so dramatically?

The decision to find her family had not been easy. Karen had lived, until she was twelve, off and on, with her mother. She knew no other relatives, but she knew she had grandparents because her mother visited them sometimes. Her mother teased her by waving a photograph of a man, who she said, was Karen's father. Karen had wanted so desperately as a child to know who her father was and to meet her relations. She imagined how her father would come home and hug her, delighted at meeting his daughter for the first time but eventually she accepted that this would never happen. It was easier to let go of her fantasy family, than to cling to the dream. A tear fell from Karen's lids as she thought back to that little girl.

But it was the diagnosis that changed everything. She had to find out who she had inherited this painful condition from; was it from her father's family or her mother's? What were the implications for any children she might have? These were the reasons why, Karen told herself, she should find out; although she was self-aware enough to know that these reasons were partly an excuse to know family denied to her for so long.

There was another mystery too. Why, when her mother was unemployed, and lived on benefits in a rented single bedroomed apartment, had she sent Karen to be educated at one of the most prestigious public girls' boarding schools in Europe?