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Fidelity and Courage

by MaryPat Campbell

Michael worked as a printer at the Irish Independent, while Mary stayed at home waiting for the babies that never came. She stopped going out except to the shops and the church. Trips to Clarendon St. church became a daily, and then twice daily excursion. She felt comforted by kneeling in the shadows having lit her candle in front of the altar. On returning to her pew she knelt again to watch her candle burn down, its flame going from a pointed spark of light to a tiny golden pool in the darkness of the quiet church.

After Michael's sudden death, Mary thought she would go out of her mind from loneliness. Sometimes on grey Autumn days she imagined putting stones in her pockets, easing herself over the bridge and into the cold black water of the Liffey.

One bright crisp day she found herself walking down Clarendon St. past Trinity, over the bridge towards O'Connell Street. The seagulls screeched and the wind raced up the river and made her hair fly in all directions as she walked across the bridge.

A line she'd once read from the psalms kept sounding in her ears. "Call on me in the day of trouble", as she found herself swaying and pirouetting in her mind to the rhythm of the comforting words in her head.

People started to make way for her, as she found herself in the middle of a widening circle. Her body swayed and danced and her voice prayed out loud like an angel of God. It was as if one of the four bronze angels on the O'Connell monument wanted to join her, the angel of Fidelity perhaps, or maybe the angel of Courage. Mary was certain that the angel of Courage stepped down from the monument with the sole purpose of inhabiting her limbs in the dancing. People's faces swirled about her as she found herself striding out with graceful movements of her legs and her arms stretched out like a ballet dancer.