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## The Truth

by Rosalyn St Pierre

Whispering, coughing, shuffling, standing, singing, sitting, listening, crying, the family and the friends stood on one side of the church, while on the other were the unknown, ten middle aged women no less than twenty teenagers. The congregation participated in whole or part of the funeral of James Sebastian Treffgarne.

All stood with some relief as the coffin was carried down the aisle to the waiting hearse. There were whispers of 'Who are they?' Met by bemused shakes of the head. All looked with consternation at the clouds that promised an immanent deluge, and the path to the end of the graveyard deep and slippery with the autumn leaves.

Warmth, a luxury hotel, a waiter held a tray of glasses of champagne and beyond him the eldest son, Sebastian waiting to greet. He was nervous, would he recognise his elderly relations, 'Thank god,' he thought, 'Justin's at hand, always my favourite cousin.' Their mothers were sisters, so the children formed friendships from the cradle.

The first wave of the elderly relations were easy. Experienced in the ways of funerals and apparently feeling little remorse on the death of his father, they swept by, picking up a glass without a glance in his direction and made off to chat to 'Dear Gladys' his mother, who sat in dignified splendour at the top table.

The second wave, the friends and neighbours stumbled by with "Sorry for your loss,' or 'Miss him, he was a jolly old bugger,' or 'He lived a full life.' Again no tears, no remorse, did Sebastian detect a certain sense of relief?

It was the third wave that shook him. "Good to see you at last son,' from the first woman who seized two glasses of champagne, 'Had to see he was firmly in the ground,' and the second offered, 'Well son, ain't you the spit of that old bastard,' and similar from the next eight women, of which one said, "Time to celebrate.'

About to protest, to query who the hell they were, formal funeral lunch or not, when one of the teenagers did a high five with 'Yo brother,' and a very pretty girl, about fifteen, he guessed, gave him a kiss, 'Just a sisterly kiss' she giggled. 'What was Dad really like?'

Did he fail to hear correctly, after all he was nervous, but politely and stiffly replied, 'My father was a good man, but he was away a lot,' She looked at him sadly, 'Yes I know about that bit.' And left him to join the others.

Justin joined him, 'Who the hell are that lot? Relations? Mum's looking really worried. Still Dad has commandeered two bottles, so it looks like trouble later on from him.'

The lunch progressed, the mood among the guests lightened, funny stories about James circulated, one rather insensitive remark about how short of money he was back in the financial crash 'Always found a way out,' followed by 'or way in.' was met with laughter, but Sebastian noticed there fury in his mother's eyes. 'What did Dad do?'

Suddenly he noticed the similarity of the young people, all had his father's wiry hair, one or two his strange hands. The realisation, could they be the sons and daughters of his father? Did he have so many affairs? Surely not, the women were not angry or upset. Sperm donor? Oh god no! How many of them are there?

Then he saw his aunt nervously emptying the champagne bottle, he saw the growing fury in his uncle's eyes glaring at Justin. Justin, happily laughing and talking to the young people, Justin who looked more like them than did his assumed father.

Silence, that is best, not the place here today to talk about this but someday the truth would come out. It always did.