Bourne toWrite... creative writing workshops

Buddy

by Karen Glennon

Mam swanned in from an evening with "the girlies"—all in their 60s—rediscovering their youth. It was one in the morning. Where had she been till this hour?

"I thought you were going to bingo?" I admonished, feeling peeved for no particular reason. A grown woman, she looked spectacular. Blonde highlights over the past few months, a Slimming World membership, and a whole new wardrobe had taken years off her.

"Bingo?" Mam scoffed. "Go on outta that, boy! Sure, I was off dancing with the girlies. There's a great place opened up locally. It's called Wrights, but it's known as 'Cougar Town.'" She giggled, slurring her words slightly. "Who needs the gym when you can dance all night with fit young men?"

Jesus, she had a better social life than I did, a thirty-year-old who'd been forced to return home to save for a house. Rent in Dublin was astronomical. I commuted to work from our little village in Wexford, where I'd returned to live with Mam and Dad while saving for a house.

Dad! That was another story altogether.

"I'm going travelling!" he had announced soberly six months ago. "Around Asia, solo, to find myself."

Asia, me arse. Sure, hadn't he travelled a mere 90 kilometres to Dublin and shacked up with a young one half his age? An absolute cliché!

We might have forgiven Dad for leaving if he hadn't taken the dog. Buddy was the heart of our home. That lying rat crept into our house in the early hours of the morning, a week after his departure, and led our beautiful golden labrador through the open front door. The miserable gobshite even took a big bag of dog food and a packet of poo bags.

I felt Buddy's loss deeply. While Mam was rediscovering her youth, I was gaining pounds rapidly, caught between loneliness and the lack of long dog walks. I'd even taken to eating all the leftovers Buddy usually scoffed when we left the table.

Then three things happened…

Mam persuaded me to join her at Slimming World, where I met a lovely lass called Maeve. Pleasantly plump, she shared my joys of weight loss. Likewise, we commiserated with one another over weight gain. We quickly became a couple, taking advantage of Mam's escalating social life and furtively groping one another on the sofa like lustful teenagers.

Two weeks after my parents' divorce was finalised, Maeve and I broke apart hastily as Mam bounced into the front room, screaming with excitement. She whirled around, waving a piece of paper in the air.

"I've won the Euromillions!" she screamed at the top of her voice. "I've won the feckin' Euromillions. That gobshite can't get a penny. We're rich!"

Then Buddy came home! We opened the front door one rainy morning, and there he was, dripping wet on our doorstep.

"Buddy!" Mam and I screamed with delight, stopping abruptly as we saw Dad's car door open. His hair was no longer salt-and-pepper; it was white. Wrinkles creased his mean-looking, sun-tanned face as he opened his boot and lifted out suitcases.

"Let me help you with those," I said, walking purposefully towards him.

"Ah, me boy," he bellowed. "You're looking good!"

Taking the suitcases from his big, thick hands, I shoved them back into the boot, took him by his right arm, and propelled him forcefully back into his car.

"Off with you now!" I shouted. "You did an unforgivable thing. You took Buddy!"

Back inside, our beautiful Buddy ran around in circles, tail wagging frantically. He, too, had won the Euromillions.