

## Rún Oscailte

*Áine Ní Ghlinn*

Ní dhéanadh an tseanmháthair mórán gáire riamh. Shiúladh sí le maide nó le cúnaimh gualainne dá mbeadh a leithéid ar fáil ach ar ndóigh b'in rud nach bhfuair sí riamh ón seanathair a bhí díbeartha aici isteach sa seomra cúil agus ar ndóigh níor chuir aon duine aon mhilleán uirthi. É tuillte go maith aige a dúirt siad ach ní dúirt siad aon rud eile mar nach labhraíodh daoine faoi na rudaí sin an uair sin mar nach raibh na focail ag daoine agus fiú dá mbeadh na focail acu bheadh náire orthu iad a úsáid.

Dhéanadh an tseanmháthair í féin a ní i mbáisín a líonadh sí le crúiscín mór a líonadh sí ón mbuicéad a líonadh sí ón gcaidéal thíos an bóthar. Bhí sí seang is gan a bheith rólaídir is ní raibh sé éasca lámh an chaidéil a luascadh ach ní raibh aon rogha eile aici seachas a bheith salach agus spallta ag an tart mar ní raibh seans dá laghad go raghadh seisean síos an bóthar leis an mbuicéad. Seachas dá gceapfadh sé go mbeadh cailíní óga ag an gcaidéal a bhféadfadh sé lán na súl a bhaint astu nó níos mó mura mbeadh ann ach an t-aon duine amháin.

Bhí a fhios ag an tseanmháthair nach bhféadfaí é a thrust ach ní labhraíodh daoine faoi na rudaí sin an uair sin agus nuair a thosaigh an déagóir óg béaldorais ag cur suas meáchain agus nuair a d'imigh sí ar cuairt fhada chun aire a thabhairt d'aintín nár chuala aon duine trácht uirthi riamh roimhe sin ní dúirt aon duine rud ar bith is nuair a tháinig sí ar ais ní dúirt siad tada ach an oiread ach gur tháinig a hathair siúd síos chuig an seanathair is gur thug sé buille sluaiste dó ar chúl a chinn. Buille nár mharaigh é ach gur shíl go leor gur mhór an trua sin.

Ní théadh an cailín óg amach mórán ina dhiaidh sin ach théadh cailíní óga eile amach mar nár labhair aon duine faoi mar nárbh ann do na focail agus dá bharr sin bhí cailíní óga nár chuala na focail nár labhraíodh is níor thuig aon duine go dtí go raibh sé ródhéanach is go raibh cailín óg eile ar cuairt chuig aintín eile nár chualathas trácht uirthi riamh. Agus nuair a tháinig sise ar ais tar éis naoi mí tháinig a hathair agus a huncail arbh é an sáirsint áitiúil é chun an tí agus sluasaid an duine acu agus thug siad buille i ndiaidh buille i ndiaidh buille don seanathair.

Níor tháinig an seanathair chuige féin i gceart ariamh agus dhíbir an tseanmháthair isteach in Ospidéal na Sean é le go lobhfadh sé chun báis is ní dhearna aon duine gearán. Gach seans go raibh na daoine a bhí in Ospidéal na Sean róshean le gearán a dhéanamh is cinnte bhí siad róshean le go gcuirfeadh an seanathair isteach orthu fiú dá mbeadh sé in ann. Nuair a bhí an tseanmháthair ag an

gcaidéal is an buicéad á líonadh aici níor chuir aon duine a thuairisc ná níor luaigh siad timpiste na sluaistí cé go leagadh duine lámh chineasta éadrom ar a gualainn ó am go chéile.

Nuair a fuair seisean bás ar deireadh gan oiread is cuairteoir amháin aige riamh shiúil an tseanmháthair go dínitiúil i ndiaidh na cónra gan chóta dubh ná deoir. Is nuair a bhí an dornán cré le caitheamh aici mar ba dhual don bhaintreach rinne sí é a radadh anuas mar a bheadh dornán cloch amhail is dá mbeadh an chónra a crústáil aici agus bhí. Chonacthas ag an gcaidéal í an mhaidin dar gcionn agus í ag líonadh a buicéid agus gan aon mhaide siúil aici ach cuma na hóige uirthi agus gáire ar a béal nach bhfaca aon duine sa pharóiste le dhá scór bliain.

## **An Open Secret**

*Áine Ní Ghlinn*

(prose translation)

The grandmother rarely ever smiled. She used to walk with a stick for support or indeed a shoulder if there was one available but she never got that from the grandfather whom she'd banished into the back room and nobody could blame her. He deserved no better they said but they said no more than that because people didn't talk about those things in those days because they didn't have the words and even if they had the words they hadn't the voice to use them.

The grandmother used to wash herself in a basin she filled with a jug that she filled from a bucket that she filled at the pump down the road. She was thin and not too strong and it wasn't easy to work the handle but what choice did she have unless she wanted to die of dirt and thirst because there wasn't a snowball's chance in hell that he'd go to the pump. Not unless he thought there might be a few young girls there to feast his eyes on or even more if there was just one on her own.

The grandmother knew he wasn't to be trusted but nobody talked about those things in those days and when the young teenager next door started to put on weight and disappeared out of the blue on a long visit to an aunt that nobody had ever heard of nobody said a word and when she came back still nobody said a word though her father came down to the

grandfather and gave him a belt of a shovel on the back of the head. It didn't kill him although there were plenty who said more's the pity that it didn't.

The young teenager didn't go out much after that but other young girls did because nobody talked about those things because they didn't have the words and so the girls who went out knew nothing of the things that weren't said and then it was too late and another girl was gone to visit another aunt that nobody had ever heard of. And when she came back her father and her uncle who happened to be the local sergeant came down to the house with a shovel each and they hit the grandfather time after time after time.

The grandfather never fully recovered and the grandmother signed him into the County Home so he could rot to death and nobody blamed her. The people in the Home were maybe too old to complain and definitely too old for the grandfather to bother them even if he could. When the grandmother was filling her bucket at the pump nobody ever asked how he was and they never mentioned the accident with the shovels although sometimes somebody from time to time would lay a kindly hand on her shoulder.

When the grandfather died eventually without ever having a single visitor in the County Home the grandmother walked with dignity behind the coffin but with no black coat and she never shed a single tear. And when it came to time to throw the widow's fist of clay she flung it down like a blast of stones as if she was pelting him and not the coffin which in her head was exactly what she was doing. The following morning neighbours saw her filling her bucket at the pump with no walking stick at all and a smile on her face that nobody in the parish had seen for more than forty years.