

RESTLESS SPIRIT

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The Story of Rose Quinn

Margaret Hawkins



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FOR JOHN QUINN

PROLOGUE

Blue flowers in the graveyard. Patricia Quinn Murphy gripped the handle of the rusty entrance gate as a tiny shiver ran down her spine. So another detail of what her daughter, Catherine, had seen was correct.

Catherine had a gift - a psychic one. Patricia had no doubt about that now.

When Catherine had connected with Rose for the first time, ten months earlier, in September 1999, Catherine, then twenty-eight, had seen her long-dead relative standing in this graveyard. Blue flowers lay on the ground then, beside the emaciated figure of Rose, marking the spot where the Clongeen woman had been buried, without coffin, without priest, in May 1907. It had been the proof Patricia needed that there was a burial plot at St Senan's psychiatric hospital in County Wexford, formerly known as the Enniscorthy District Lunatic Asylum for the Insane Poor. It was also proof that her great-aunt Rose was buried there.

Patricia couldn't wait to tell Catherine about the blue flowers - it would be another unusual phone call from this quiet place.

Patricia was glad to have been invited to attend the July 2000 pattern that day. 'At least they have some kind of service here once a year,' she said to herself. She doubted, though, if many came near the place in the intervening months. This was a big day for her - and for Rose. Today Rose Quinn would be prayed for here for the first time. Patricia had even been invited to read a prayer herself during the service - she hoped now that emotion wouldn't overcome her as she spoke.

She looked again at the flowers. The blue hydrangeas sat

at the base of the framed poem that she had placed in the cemetery six months before:

Discarded,
Disowned ...
Suffering
Untold

She'd written the poem in memory of her great-aunt who had been committed to the asylum, sent there having refused to live with the man she was forced to marry. A woman who, for most of her life, Patricia hadn't known existed.

*

Who could have put the blue flowers there? Someone from the hospital? A kind-hearted local resident? Any other colour and Patricia wouldn't have batted an eyelid but these were different.

Were the blue flowers a sign from Rose that her goal was on the way to finally being achieved? Were they a 'thank you' from the next life and encouragement to complete the task? Patricia decided they were.

Patricia's first real visit to the graveyard in Enniscorthy was still heavily imprinted on her memory. She had visited it less than twenty-four hours after she and Catherine had returned from Spain. At the time she had wondered why they had had to go to Spain for such a thing to happen, for Catherine to connect with her dead great-aunt. It was probably that they were so relaxed in one another's company, they had decided, enjoying a post-illness break, mother and daughter free to think and talk about family roots and mysteries.

'Anyway, spirits don't need airline tickets,' Catherine said at the time.

'AND THEN THERE WAS ROSE'

John Quinn, now almost ninety-four, paused to tap his pipe on the palm of his hand in the cottage at Ballylannon, Wellingtonbridge, County Wexford.

It was New Year's Eve 1993 and he stood, back to the fire, not making eye contact with his fifty-year-old daughter, Patricia.

She sat alongside in an armchair, notebook in hand and pen poised. 'That's all your dad's side of the family then. Have I got them all - Jack, Mary, Elizabeth, Johanna and your dad, Patrick?'

John Quinn shifted his weight from one foot to the other as Patricia waited for an answer, the clock ticking loudly in the silence.

And then there was Rose ... ' he said.

'Rose? Where does she fit in? I never heard of an aunt Rose.'

John Quinn cleared his throat, shifting uneasily again. 'She was a year younger than my father.'

'But if she was in the family why haven't we heard of her before?'

John Quinn cleared his throat again.

'She was made to marry a man,' he said eventually. 'When she wouldn't go live with him she was put in the asylum.'

Patricia sat up straight.

'The asylum? In Enniscorthy - St Senan's?'

'Yes.'

'Good God! She was put in there just because she wouldn't go live with her husband?'

'Yes.'

'It doesn't bear thinking about,' Patricia said, mental pictures of her great-aunt's suffering forming in her mind.

'God damn it, it should never have happened,' her father said quietly, turning to place his unused pipe on the mantelpiece.

'What happened to her? Did she get out?' Patricia asked.

'No. She died within a year.'

'Dear God! What did she die of - do you know?'

'Disease, probably. You didn't live long in them places them times. If disease didn't get you, starvation did.'

'Do you remember anything about her - about what happened?'

'I was at the wedding. We all were.'

'What age were you then?'

'About six, so it must have been 1906. Winter time, I remember; there was frost on the ground.'

'What happened?'

'I was standing outside with my mother,' he said quietly.

'Aunt Rose was crying and my mother was trying to persuade her to go in.'

Tears stung Patricia's own eyes as she imagined the scene.

She had stood outside the church in Clongeen herself on her own wedding day in 1964. She had gone there of her own free will. To go there against it would have been unthinkable.

'Who did she marry?' she asked. Her father paused again.

'A Murphy from Carrig-on-Bannow.'

Patricia felt a shiver run down her spine. She had married a Murphy from Carrig-on-Bannow herself

'Is he related to Michael?' she asked, almost in shock.

'Well, Michael's family moved to the village years after, so I don't think so.'

'Gracious! Do you know his first name - the husband's?'

'Patrick. Pat the Pumper he was called,' said her father.

'He pumped the water for the engines when they were building the railway in Wellingtonbridge - that's probably how he got the nickname. He worked on building the track same as your grandfather did. That's probably how the match was made, with the two of them knowing one another from the job.'

Patricia had heard talk many times of the railway being built between Waterford and Rosslare Harbour. Why wouldn't she when it ran through the Rosegarland estate where she'd been reared, when the building of it had been a monumental time in the lives of the people of her area? Hadn't she crossed it too, most days of her life?

Now she didn't know what to say. As well as the shock of this new information, the injustice of what had happened to her great-aunt struck her deeply. Put in a mental institution just because she wouldn't live with someone she was forced to marry - Patricia felt both sad and angry at the thought of it.

'But surely the family tried to get her out? Surely Granny and Granddad tried?'

Her father looked straight ahead.

'I don't know that they did - or could. Times were different then,' he said. 'The husband put her in - that's the way we were told it. Maybe they could do nothing after that.'

'No matter, her family shouldn't have turned their backs on her,' said Patricia to herself, her mind now preoccupied with the story of a relative she had never known.

*

As her father's health declined in the days and weeks that followed, Patricia wondered many times why he had told her the story of Rose. Was it to free himself, before death, of the burden of a secret that he had carried too long? She felt sad at the thought of a grown man carrying such a load with him throughout his lifetime. The shame of having a family member

in the asylum had obviously struck deep. Stigma - there was still too much of it.

Rose's story was seldom far from Patricia's mind from that day on, even though family concerns prevented her from immediately doing the research she swore that night in 1991 that she would do.

Thoughts of Rose stayed with her through her father's final months and the grieving that followed, through the years of caring for her mother who had developed Alzheimer's, through subsequent days when she was ill herself. Fibromyalgia had set in during her days of caring for her mother, making her physically unable to cope. The fatigue was chronic, muscles pained and joints stiffened, making daily life difficult.

'You pushed your body too far for too long,' Catherine said.

'In the end it forced you to slow down.'

For two years life wasn't easy but as she came to terms with coping with the condition thoughts of Rose increased.

Every time she drove past St Senan's hospital on the way to Enniscorthy, for instance, she would wonder about Rose's life and death in the place. Had anyone visited her? Had she been brought home for burial?

The day she eventually rang the priest in Clongeen to check if he had found Rose's baptismal and marriage records still stood out in her mind. Yes, he had found a record of the marriage between Rose Quinn, spinster, of Rosegarland and Patrick Murphy, bachelor, of Ballyfrory, Carrig-on-Bannow. He had found her baptismal records too.

'That's wonderful,' said Patricia, feeling that Rose was now becoming more and more a real person. She wasn't prepared for what he would say next, however.

'She was born in 1870,' he said. 'The eleventh of July.' 'The eleventh of July? That was her birthday!

Patricia marvelled at the coincidences - the same birthday,

marrying a man with the same name from the same parish in the same church.

'What was her address on the marriage certificate, please? Did it say what her occupation was?' she asked.

'Yes. Her address is Rosegarland. She's listed as "house
< >
servant .

So, Rose had worked in Rosegarland just like she had. Another coincidence. Patricia had worked there as cook for four years before she got married. All that matching detail and she had never heard of Rose.

In other circumstances she probably would have been named after her because of their coinciding birthdays. Hadn't all the other names in the family - John, Patrick, Elizabeth, Catherine come down through the generations? Rose's incarceration had wiped her out of the family history books, making her a namesake of none.

Patricia now felt a great sense of connection with the grand aunt she had never known. She felt a huge curiosity also. What sort of person was she? What did she look like? What had her life been like? How had she felt having a marriage arranged for her? What had happened to her in the asylum? Where had she been buried? There was a lot to find out.

*

Patricia was glad to get back to the hotel bedroom in the south-eastern Spanish resort of Roquetas De Mar. It had been a long but enjoyable day.

Catherine followed behind, holding their wine glasses as her mother unlocked the door. Patricia was glad to see Catherine so happy. This September 1999 holiday was a good idea.

'You know, I've never felt so relaxed in my life,' Patricia said, throwing her bag on the bed.

'Me neither,' said Catherine. 'I bags the shower first.'

'OK, as long as you don't take too long - my feet are covered in sand.'

It was a holiday they had both looked forward to - the holiday abroad promised to themselves when they had both recovered from illness.

'A celebration of life, that's what it is,' said Patricia. 'It was a good job nobody saw us when we got off the plane, though, or they'd have said we were a right pair of mad eejits.'

Catherine laughed, grabbing her wash-bag. 'They'd have been right too.'

When the plane had touched down and the warm Mediterranean wind hit them, they had run, arms outstretched, to the arrivals building, revelling in the heat and their delight that they had arrived. Why shouldn't they enjoy a hard-saved-for holiday now that they had both recovered - Patricia from her initial illness, Catherine after surgery.

'You can't keep good things down,' said Patricia, looking out the window at the picturesque scene below.

The bus tour of Almira had gone well. She and Catherine had been talking all day about family, close in a way that only mother and daughter can be. They had visited castle ruins and ancient buildings and talk had turned to places of importance in their own lives.

The Rosegarland estate, the place that Patricia knew so well from being reared there and the place that Catherine knew so well from visiting her grandparents there so often, featured strongly as usual. They talked of all the Quinns that had worked there, of who had married whom, of the aunts and uncle of her father's who had lived there too.

Rose was mentioned, seldom far from Patricia's mind, especially as in the preceding months she had tried to get information from St Senan's hospital by telephone and letter. Was there a graveyard attached to the former asylum, she had

asked? Were there records of Rose Quinn or Rose Murphy as a patient or of her being buried in the hospital grounds?

A trawl through Clongeen parish records and those of Kilcavan, the graveyard where Rose's husband was buried, had yielded nothing, leading Patricia to conclude that Rose was more than likely buried in Enniscorthy.

There had been no reply from the hospital.

'They probably threw the letter in the bin hoping you'd go away,' Catherine said.

'You can't blame them really. They probably think they have enough to do looking after the present patients without worrying about someone who died almost a hundred years ago.'

'Probably,' said Catherine.

As she waited for her daughter to wash, Patricia sat on the bed, unable to stop thinking about Catherine's gift. Today they had spoken of it again as Catherine walked among the historic buildings of Almira, picking up 'feelings' about the place.

Patricia had been aware of Catherine's being different long before now. One day when she was five they had picnicked at St Mullins in Carlow. Catherine had insisted that she had been there before. Patricia knew she hadn't.

As a child, Catherine also had an awareness of people that no one else could see. In Rosegarland, when visiting, she never played in front of her grandparents' cottage because of the 'people there', she said. Patricia had looked and saw no one.

Catherine had often told her mother of feelings she got when she visited other people's houses - happy feelings, sad feelings, depending on what had happened there. She liked to play a game too, even still, of describing a house that she had never visited - before she got there. She would exchange a secret smile with her mother, then, when the details of her description proved correct.

She hadn't told many people about what she could do

though, fearing what they'd say. Seeing things as she did wasn't normal, she felt, and for many years she tried to shut it out.

Patricia wasn't unsettled by what her daughter could do, however. Hadn't she 'seen' her own grandfather, Patrick Quinn, one day in the cottage in Rosegarland herself? He had died years before she was born. Her father told her years later that she had described 'the old man' down to a tee but that he had been afraid to tell her so at the time in case she was frightened and wouldn't sleep in the house any more.

Did she have a gift too, one that was simply more finely tuned, one generation down, in Catherine?

Patricia herself always had strong feelings about places and objects. Walls attracted her - stones too. She found herself drawn to them. Her kitchen window at home was full of them, brought back from places she'd visited, better souvenirs for her than anything you could buy in a shop, she always said. She only brought back the ones that felt good, though. Occasionally when she picked one up from some ancient site it seemed to spit at her and she immediately replaced it.

She had never witnessed anyone connecting properly with a spirit, though.

*

Both now washed and ready for bed, Patricia and Catherine sat up talking in the bedroom of the Hotel Playa Capricho.

As the minutes passed and the conversation deepened to talk of Rose, Catherine lay back against the headboard, her eyes taking on a look that Patricia wasn't familiar with.

'Do you know where I am now?' Catherine said, looking to one side.

'Where?' Patricia asked, watching her closely.

'In Rosegarland, looking up the lane at Uncle Willie's cottage.' Willie Quinn was the youngest of Patricia's uncles.

'That's near where Rose lived after the family was evicted from Newcastle. What else do you see?' asked Patricia, unsure now of what was happening but feeling the urge to ask questions.

Rose had been on her mind a lot in the last few weeks. What was on her mind was often on Catherine's too - she had learned that much over the years. Was it empathy, telepathy? Whatever it was, it was real.

Rose's family had been evicted from the house and farm in Newcastle in 1881. Rose was eleven years old when her father had been reduced from tenant farmer to estate labourer.

'Who do you see now?'

'I see the names - the shapes of the names - all the family ones - Patrick, Kate, Johanna, Elizabeth. I see riding boots - a man wearing them.'

'Is he small? Is it Jack?' Patricia asked, having heard that her grand-uncle Jack had been small in stature and that as coachman at Rosegarland he had seldom been seen in anything but riding boots.

She saw Catherine look up and down the length of herself.

'Not that small, he says!'

Patricia laughed. It was the first time she had insulted a spirit!

'Ask him about Rose - does he know where she is?'

The next few moments were very strange - Catherine speaking all the time, listing the places that Jack was taking her, as if he was showing her the Rosegarland estate and all the Quinns who lived there.

'There's a woman beside him now. He says it's Rose. He says he knows you have been thinking about her.'

'What's she like? Tell me!'

Catherine stared to one side of her mother, as if checking for more detail, then looked back and grinned. 'She's not good-

looking. She's handsome, she says - a Quinn, just like you.'

'Ouch!' Patricia didn't know whether to laugh or cry. At least Rose had a sense of humour.

Catherine was looking away again.

'She's got a child beside her. A boy with fair hair, maybe five or six years old.'

A child!

'She had a child? Was that why they were trying to marry her off?'

'She won't say. She says it's not about the child.'

'Oh.'

Patricia was now keeping eye contact with her daughter.

'Ask her where she is - where she's buried.'

'She says you've been told where she is,' said Catherine.

'Is she at St Senan's?'

Catherine was concentrating hard, her eyes wide open. It was an odd sensation. Later she would describe it as feeling as if she was a few feet to the right of herself - of her own reality.

'She's buried in the graveyard behind the hospital. I can see her there now.'

'There is a graveyard! I knew it!' said Patricia.

She listened now as Catherine continued to talk.

'She's about your height but thin, very thin - her cheekbones are almost sticking out. She's got dark clothes on - long and rough looking. And boots. Her hair is tied up but there are wisps of it straggling round her face.'

'The graveyard - what's it like?'

'Not like a normal one,' said Catherine. 'It looks like part of a field. There are walls on three sides and a ditch on the lower side. There's a bank of ground on the upper side, covered in grass that's falling over.'

'There are no individual graves?' Patricia asked, trying to create her own mental picture of the place.

'There's a stone wall behind where Rose is standing. I can see one of the hospital's towers over it.'

Patricia hardly dared to breathe in case she disturbed her daughter.

'Yew trees too - four of them and a big cross on the upper side with steps going up to it.'

'Where is Rose?'

Catherine looked straight ahead of her, but into some unknown distance. 'She's on the high side, near the path. Past the cross with the steps up to it.'

So - Catherine knew exactly where she was buried!

'What else can you see?'

Catherine concentrated again. 'There are little white monuments - odd things - lying in the grass and flowers. And there are blue flowers on the ground beside Rose.'

Patricia was amazed. 'What's Rose doing? Is she saying anything?'

'She's got her fists clenched, like she's frustrated about something. Ha! She says she's been trying to connect with you for years but you wouldn't listen. She says she realised I could hear her so she's making contact through me instead.'

So, the coincidences had a purpose - if only she'd been able to go beyond them - but never mind, Rose was doing so now through Catherine.

Ask her what it is she wants of us - why she feels the need to contact us.'

Catherine waited for the feelings and words of her great-great-aunt to come through. 'She wants two things, she says.'

'Tell me!'

'Recognition by family. And her story told.'

So, Rose did feel let down by her family. She wasn't at peace because no one had tried to help her. The injustice of what had been done to her had driven her to seek acknowledgement

now, two generations down.

'Ask her was it her husband that committed her?' said Patricia.

Catherine concentrated again. 'She says the man is not important. It's family she wants recognition from.'

Did that mean that her family had been involved in her committal? Or that they hadn't supported her when she needed it? There were still so many questions.

Catherine moved in the bed. 'She's gone,' she said, the unfamiliar look now leaving her face.

Looking at her watch, Patricia saw that it was five o'clock in the morning. The drinks they had brought with them to the room at 11 p.m. sat there untouched.

The next morning at breakfast they were both subdued, shocked almost.

'Did that really happen?' they asked one another.

'The only way to find out is to go to the hospital as soon as we get home and see if there is a graveyard,' said Patricia, butterflies in her stomach at the thought of it. 'I bet there will be - just like you said.'

'It'll be something if there is,' said Catherine, not sure how she would feel if there was - or how devastated she would be if there wasn't. 'Pity I have to go to Galway for the diving course - I'd go with you if I didn't have to go straight there from the airport.'

'Don't worry,' said her mother. 'I'll ring you as soon as I find it, so keep your phone switched on all Monday afternoon.'

Would Catherine be right? Had she a powerful gift? They would have to wait three days to find out. The flight home seemed an eternity long.

*

The following Monday at halfpast two Patricia put her apron away, then locked the store room door at the Franciscan friary in Wexford town where she was employed, part-time, as cook. Seven friars to feed, five days a week - that was her work. Lunch was over now for another day. Now it was time to walk the few hundred yards to her home in John Street.

After she had given her husband, Michael, some lunch, they drove to Enniscorthy to St Senan's hospital.

Michael knew about her obsession with finding out more about Rose. He would go too. Nothing had been said about Spain, however. For now, what had happened was a secret between herself and Catherine. She knew Michael felt a bit uneasy about such things - there was no point annoying him until they knew if Catherine really was right.

The hospital was an imposing building; there was no doubt about it. Standing high in a field overlooking the Slaney River on the Wexford side of Enniscorthy town, its redbrick exterior dominated the landscape. Two huge towers marked its perimeter at each end and three smaller ones rose from the rear.

It was built in 1868 - Patricia knew that. Most people dreaded it - she knew that too - looking away as they passed, trying not to think of its significance. The red brick ... The madhouse.

Some said the building was too grand looking for an asylum - that plans had got mixed up and a building meant for India had been built here by mistake. Maybe the story was right. Patricia couldn't help wondering what India had got instead - a big grey barracks like St Otteran's hospital in Waterford or St Loman's in Mullingar, maybe?

Patricia couldn't help wondering too what Rose's feelings had been the day she was first brought here. Fear? Terror? Shame? Torment? Despair? How could she have felt anything else knowing she was going to be locked up, perhaps forever?

'I'm glad she lived only a year here. Death would have been an escape for her,' Patricia said to herself as Michael parked the car.

She told the male nurse in the outpatients' ward that she wanted to know where the hospital's graveyard was. She explained that she had been in touch with hospital management about a relative of hers, Rose Quinn, who had been a patient there many years before. Asking her to wait, the nurse departed to speak with someone in authority.

Eventually he returned.

'I'll send one of the patients to show you where it is,' he said. 'It's at the back of the hospital. He'll give you directions.'

Patricia's stomach did a somersault as she heard the words 'it's at the back of the hospital'.

Michael drove slowly up the lane towards the rear entrance to the hospital, the patient sent to give them directions sitting in the back. So, there was a graveyard!

'Turn right here,' said the man when they reached the top of the lane.

Michael did so, knowing that he must now be on the road that ran between the Roadstone quarry and Templeshannon.

The high wall that once edged the walled gardens of the hospital ended at the field gateway where the patient now told them to stop. 'That's it,' the man said, pointing into the field.

Patricia got out of the car and stood there in shock. The graveyard, its entrance about ten feet in from the main field gate, was as Catherine had described it.

There was a ditch on the lower side and a raised area on the right. A cement cross stood on the right, with steps going up to it. The place looked overgrown, with grass tumbling over.

Saying nothing, Patricia followed the patient and Michael over the stile beside the main field gate and across the few feet of ground to the graveyard entrance. The small entrance gate

creaked as she opened it. Scanning the place, she saw there were no headstones, no marked graves, as Catherine had said. Walking along the pathway Patricia noticed small, rusty white crosses strewn in the grass - the 'little white monuments'? She bent down to examine one. There were no names on any of them, not even numbers.

The elderly patient now waved his hand and smiled. 'Them's the graves,' he said, pointing at the raised area on the right. 'Them's the graves.'

'Thank you,' said Patricia. 'Thank you very much for showing them to us.'

'It's in a bit of a state all right,' Michael said, echoing what Patricia was thinking. 'I wouldn't say too many people come here.'

Patricia felt desolate, tuned into the sadness of the place. How many people had been buried here, she wondered? What terrible things had they suffered before they died? The asylum had opened in 1868 - were there hundreds buried here, thousands maybe, unclaimed by family after death? It struck her now that Rose was only one of the forgotten people.

Blue flowers - Patricia found herself somehow expecting them, given that so many other details were correct, but there was no sign of any flowers.

Catherine had said there were blue flowers on the spot where Rose had been buried. Today there were none.

'How could there be?' Patricia asked herself. She wondered how long it had been since anyone had been there with any kind of decoration.

Patricia now looked across at the far wall She couldn't see a tower of the hospital over it. So Catherine got that bit wrong too. Still, she had been spot on with so much. No one could be one hundred percent correct.

She dialled Catherine's number on her mobile phone.

'Guess what? It's like you said in so many ways!'

The next few minutes were full of excited talk, going over and over the description of the place, comparing the expectation with the reality. It was a day they would both remember forever.

'There are no blue flowers, though,' she said when Catherine asked.

'They'll turn up yet - don't worry,' said her daughter.

*

Patricia was scarcely aware of the road as Michael drove home.

'Something will have to be done,' Patricia said eventually.

'How do you mean?'

'All those people deserve to be remembered - not just Rose. Something should be done to atone for what they suffered.'

'True,' said Michael. 'The hospital mightn't want to do anything, though.'

'We'll see,' said Patricia, now lost in thought.

How could she get the graveyard cleaned up, maybe get a headstone erected in memory of those who are buried there? It was only right, she felt. She thought of Rose, buried there with no family near her, dying with no one she loved to comfort her.

Once again, Patricia longed to know everything about her great-aunt's life. What kind of existence had she had before she went into the asylum? How could she have been committed so easily? Surely no doctor would have certified her as a lunatic just because she refused to go live with her husband? Had she become hysterical when they tried to force her? Patricia knew things were different then but surely such injustices didn't happen?

'There's probably a graveyard like that beside every psychiatric hospital in the country,' said Michael as they neared Ferrycarrig.

'Probably,' said Patricia, saddened even more at that thought.

Taking out a notebook, she began to jot down a list of what she would need to do.

*

As soon as Catherine returned from Galway, she, Patricia and Patricia's older sister, Maura, went to visit the graveyard again.

They chatted happily in the car on the way up, Catherine looking forward to her first physical sight of the graveyard.

Going in through the gate, however, Catherine felt as if she had hit a wall of emotion. As the weight of the sadness overwhelmed her she began to cry. Feeling then as if she was being pulled in a particular direction, she walked along the pathway past the cross and up to a particular spot on the sloping ground beyond it. Reaching the place where she felt Rose was buried, she went down on her knees and sobbed inconsolably.

*

Rose was seldom far from Patricia's thoughts as she went about her daily routine in the weeks that followed.

Up at eight, prepare the vegetables for their own dinner, get to the friary for work at ten. Do the shopping for the friars' meals, prepare and cook the lunch, ready to serve it at one o'clock, get home by half past two to prepare Michael's lunch before he returned from Pettitt's supermarket where he worked as a bacon butcher.

Patricia's workload wasn't as great as it used to be, however.

There was a time when her three children filled the house, keeping her busy. But as soon as they had grown and moved out to make lives for themselves, and she had recovered from her care tasks and illness, she had updated her culinary skills and taken the part-time job at the friary.

At the age of twenty-one, marriage had meant leaving her job as cook in Rosegarland, the estate owned by the Leigh family where she had been reared. She still missed the place - the trees, the fields, the woods and the beauty of the estate.

It had been such a change to move into the bustle of Wexford town when she married, where one house looked across upon another and traffic passed a few feet from the door.

'How are you going to get the graveyard cleaned up?' Michael asked as she sat scribbling in the sitting-room.

'Contact politicians. See if they can help.'

'Might work,' he said, turning a page of the newspaper. Patricia wrote down another name. Writing to these people would mean Rose's story going public. Was she ready for that? Part of her didn't want to make Rose's story known. It was a private story after all. A story about family. She wasn't immune from the stigma herself. Would other members of the Quinn family resent her making it public?

She thought again of Rose. Rose wanted recognition from family, even this far down the line. A wrong had to be righted. The Quinns hadn't taken Rose in when she refused to live with her husband. No one supported her when she needed it.

The next time Patricia went to visit her parents' grave she stopped outside Clongeen church on the way home.

Rose's marriage had been an arranged one. Was the deal done in the snug of the pub across the road, she wondered. More than likely - it would have been there in 1906. Patricia found it hard to imagine what it would have been like being told to marry someone - your life planned out for you by someone else and having no power to do anything about it.

'Rose's parents would have been dead at this stage so she would have had no help from them,' Patricia thought. They were buried in the old graveyard that overlooked the church car park.

Patricia's grandfather, Patrick, Rose's elder brother, as head of the family, would have been the organiser of the wedding - she was sure of that. The fact that he had worked on the railway with Patrick Murphy made it likely, as her father had said.

Patricia wondered what Patrick Murphy, the husband, was like. Was he a good man? Was he offensive in character or looks? Was Rose in love with someone else? Had she had an illegitimate child by him or by someone else years before? Who was the child that Catherine had seen with her on that night of connection? If that child had been taken from her, the family would probably have wanted to marry her off before she'd get into trouble again.

Was that what was in their minds when they were making the match?

She hoped Patrick Murphy was a kind man. Surely Rose's brother would not have picked someone unacceptable for his sister?

She wished she knew more about her grandfather, Patrick, too. He was a small man, fond of a drop by all accounts. Could he not have done anything to stop Rose's husband committing her to the asylum? Surely no one would stand by and let that happen easily?

'People probably thought differently then,' said Michael when she voiced her opinions.

Anger tinged her reply. They were still human beings. Her family should have stood by her.'

'Maybe they hadn't got the money to. How many children did they have - six? They would have been hard set to rear them without taking in anyone else to look after - especially if she was depressed and couldn't work. There was no dole in them days.'

Maybe Michael was right. Maybe they had more than

enough to be looking after. The Quinns had never been rich. What land they had, they had been evicted from in 1881.

In 1909, she knew, her grandfather, Patrick, had finally received a few acres and a house from the Land Commission after legislation had forced landlords to sell land cheaply to the families of those who had been evicted.

It was strange. Her father had told the story of the eviction to her many times down through the years. She had been to the field in the townland of Newcastle where the house stood too. Resentment of English and landlord rule had gone deep with him as a result, she felt, culminating in his involvement in the Rising in 1916 when he was only sixteen years old. He fought the Black and Tans too; then was active on the side of De Valera in the civil war that followed.

So deeply had he been involved that he had had to emigrate to Wales for ten years until the dust settled, as he put it. He only returned in the 1930s when his mother was ill, later getting married and finding work as a stockman in Rosegarland.

The eviction had definitely sown the seed of resentment against a foreign ruler. Rose surely must have felt that too. She would have been eleven at the time of the eviction - a traumatic day for the Quinn family if the newspaper reports of the time were to be believed. Patricia had read them and been upset by them.

Twelve evictions had taken place on the Rosegarland estate that wet and bitterly cold day. One hundred and fifty armed police escorted the five bailiffs from one tenant farm to the next, reaching Patrick Quinn's homestead at ten o'clock in the morning.

'This was an extremely hard case,' the newspaper report said, 'Quinn owed two-and-a-half years rent: £20 8s 8d. His land was poor and marshy and out of this Quinn endeavoured

to support a household of ten. The roof of the house was thatch and the interior comprised a kitchen and one room.'

Guns, neighbours shouting and heaping curses on the heads of the police and the landlord, raw fear - Patricia could only imagine the desperation as the family's belongings were left on the side of the road and they were helped to an old barn down the road by the representatives of the Ladies' League, the Misses Keating and the Misses Murphy - women subjected to 'disrespectful sneers from the bailiffs and policemen' for their trouble.

Patricia didn't know how long it was before her great-grandfather got a job and a labourer's cottage on the Leigh estate but that was what had happened. The gate lodge the Quinns had lived in was still there.

All that was left now to show the Quinns had lived in the townland of Newcastle was the field named after them.

Funny how the eviction could be talked about in the family but not what happened to Rose:

Abandoned in life
And then in death.

Patricia went back to compiling the list of all the people she would contact: TDs, county councillors, the South Eastern Health Board, priests, the Bishop of Ferns, Brendan Comiskey - surely he'd be concerned about the state of the graveyard? There were seventeen names in all. All she needed to do now was to write the letter.

She would send a copy of the letter to the local papers too. A wave of nervousness swept over her at the thought of it being published. Rose's story would be in the public domain. There would be no turning back.

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