

Coming of age

Irene

She stood in her mother's bedroom looking at the things laid out neatly on top of the bed.

The old traditional wedding rhyme sprung to mind and she murmured it quietly to herself.

‘Something old, something new, something borrowed, something
blue, and a sixpence in your shoe.’

A string of pearls, her something old. They had been her grandmother's, handed down to her by her father only a few short months before.

They didn't sparkle but each pearl carried a soft light, a glow that seemed to come from within. Each seed carrying a story, a secret, a ghost from the past.

Her something new; a ring of silk flowers to crown her head. Attached was a gossamer veil that floated and draped around her arm as she held it up high.

She played with the folds in her dress, a simple ivory gown, her something borrowed. Traditionally a borrowed wedding dress symbolised the transfer of happiness from a woman in a long and happy marriage to the new bride. She smiled as recalled attending that particular wedding. She had been sat next to a distant cousin of the groom, who after the speeches and during their prawn cocktail starter, had whispered to her partner; “I'll give it six months!” If tradition was to hold true this didn't bode well for her future marriage.

Her something blue, a garish grater. Oh how her mum and sisters had giggled like Schoolgirls at their gift. She had protested vehemently, insisting she would not be wearing it. They all knew she would and here it was.

Although unworn, the shoes had been placed on the rug at the side of the bed to keep feet off the cold Lino floor. A polished sixpence glinted in the right foot.

Her Trousseau was complete.

She picked up the pearls , rolling the beads between her fingers. She could feel their sandy, gritty texture. There was something comforting that something so beautiful had so many imperfections, just like life, just like family, she thought.

She remembered at her show of presents an old aunt warning her not to wear them on her wedding day as they would bring tears. It seemed ironic that on this joyous day they should represent sorrow.

As she held them pictures began to flood her head: holidays 'down the water, to Ayr , Dunoon or Saltcoats, a family favourite. Bus trips to faraway places, Black-hill, Tullibody , to visit cousins. Christmas mornings, one of dad's socks hung at the end of the bed. A tangerine stuffed in the toe, and brimming with chocolate coins, a yo-yo, a pack of happy families or donkey and other treasures.

The doorbell rang its shrill sound bringing her back into the room. It was the flowers her mum informed her as she passed the bedroom door. She followed her down the hall and into the living room where she sat in her armchair. Her sponge rollers were secured tightly in her hair and held in place with a paisley

patterned silk scarf. She had slept with them in all night and they would only be removed at the very last minute. Vidal Saison - who needs him darling!

The bouquet sat on her mothers lap. She had chosen pal pink flowers as she had read somewhere that they represented gratitude, joy, a nurturing relationship and a sincere love. She had the good graces later to laugh at herself for being so sentimental but she had been young , naive and madly in love. She watched as her mother placed the small silver locket holding a picture of her father among the stems. She buried it deep in the blooms, burying with it her grief, putting it away, just for today, just for her. She turned and smiled, the smile only a mother possesses which says everything will be fine. In that moment she felt she loved her mother more than she had ever loved her before.

The cars came and went fetching everyone to the church. She and her young brother waited for the bridal car. He paced the floor, patting himself down checking that everything that was needed was safe. As he paced the coins in his trouser pockets jingled cheerily. This seemed to reassure him, plenty of loose change for the scrambled. A tradition sadly resigned to folklore and the history books in the name of health and safety. Coins would be tossed out the car window as they left. They didn't want their neighbours to think they were mean as they shared their happiness.

At intervals he would stop at the window and look down into the street below, giving commentary as to who had gathered at the gate to send her off and wish her all the best.

He seemed to be avoiding looking at her, until after one of his updates he turned to face her.

“You look beautiful.” He said and with those simple, heartfelt words, she felt beautiful.

He paused then continued, his voice breaking slightly. “I’m proud to be giving you away.”

She moved forward and hugged him and without any teenage awkwardness he hugged her tight. He pushed her away playfully and laughed saying; “I just hope that when I’ve given you away Tony doesn’t give you back.”

The moment had truly passed.

The strong wooden doors of the church lay wide open. The congregation hushed as the organizers began to play the first notes off the time honoured, serene Pachelbels Cannon. But she didn’t feel serene, but emotionally intense, a mixture of nerves, excitement and love.

Her brother took her arm and they began their march down the aisle. She was conscious she was speeding up, with every step, tugging at his arm. He placed his free hand on top of hers and with that gentle touch the butterflies became quiet and she felt calm and they walked slowly as one.

She realised that she had caught a glimpse of the man he would become, his fathers son.

Both of them in different ways had come of age that day.