

Five Golden Rings
&
A Diamond

Marie Seltenrych

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DEDICATION

Preface

Dedicated to Keith Martin Rafferty
Beloved brother, World Traveller, Poet
I just read a book
A story of love
Was there and then gone for ever
Peaceful in mind
Bring peace to all
Smiles of love
Conquer all
Melt away pain
Happiness gain.
©By Kieth Martin Rafferty

Foreword

Someone once asked me if this was my real life. Others believe this story to be a personal biography. I was inspired to write this story for many years. Finally, I put pen to paper and allowed my imagination to flourish thanks to a small baby.

Our Protagonist Niamh (pronounced Neave) and meaning Queen of the Land (in the Irish language), was once a newborn baby that arrived at my house in Ireland. Wrapped in a tartan shawl a Tinker came to our door at Skehanagh 63 Main Street Leixlip. A newborn was hidden under her tartan. Baby made a puddle onto the red painted sparkling floor of our small living room and I recall my thoughts.

“She is making my Mammy’s floor dirty.” I stared at the shoe I was swinging by its laces.

We did not say a word to each other.

I was four years old.

This haunting memory remained with me. Now, this newborn is a protagonist.

Marie Seltenrych (nee Rafferty):

Margate, Queensland, Australia

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CHAPTER ONE
“I found this, Cinderella,”

MARCH 1968

I sense the soft rays of sunshine creeping over the rolling green hills into the valley towards our waking campsite on a crisp and flawless March morning. I dare not open my eyes for my dreams will fade into mist. My thin blanket barely keeps the warmth in my core, but one day I will live in a pretty, warm place, where a fire always burns brightly. The wise women talk about a time for everything that happens; I long for my time to be with the one I was always meant to be: to find a true love to cherish and cover me with his warm embrace. A sparkling flash drifts over my wild dreams as if someone waved a blanket made with thinnest gold; I reach

out to catch it. A figure stands before me and calls me over with his smile: then everything vanishes like a mist on a cold morning.

I open my eyes, leap from my bed. The van door is already swinging open and a weak beam of sun tries in vain to burn the thinly veneered door and warped linoleum worn to a sliver.

I stretch my arms and wiggle, gazing out. A sliver of grassy dell with rocks jutting out at every hillock make the landscape appear as outer galactic. The sloping field, around half an acre in size, is dotted with a jumble of vans, carts, horses grazing happily; groups of two and threes' work seamlessly together building fires, gutting fish and boiling water for a good morning cup of tea and hearty breakfast. The field is lined with a medium to low stone wall with a gate through the middle on the East side, leaning trees facing north; a stoney

road on the South perimeter and the boundary slope disappearing towards the sea on the West. Idyllic in a way as the farmer who owns the property has not appeared in any form or chased our tribe away thus far; we having been here for four months already with no concerns about leaving at all. Well-settled in, one might say. A blue sky is dusted with grey and fluffy balls of vapour as they rush onwards towards their rainfall destination, leaving our patch dry.

I sit on a jutting rock with the Murphy clan at the sparking fire sizzling with the taunting smell of burning fish scales and melt-in-the mouth trout from the Owenriff River. Voices are low and hearty as a half dozen folk go about preparing breakfast. Mary's twin boys wrestle in the bright green grass amid wild blood red poppies. I turn my face towards the sea and listen for the sound of the waves crashing against the

rocks like a giant's heartbeat. I hug my woollen shawl around my bare shoulders as Paddy Flynn, tipping his red tartan cap with its black furry blob on top, carrying an armful of broken sticks with one arm locked around them, walks past, calling out, "The top of the morning to ye, Miss Niamh!" I smile and nod. His gaping mouth is big and expectant and his jaunt is jolly.

"He's getting a bit friendly, now why is that?" I ponder.

Liam, the growing boy of ten, clad in a too-large Aran jumper and flannel trousers held up with two straps, jumps to attention. His ruddy complexion and soft smile with twinkling blue eyes and knotty rusty hair take me by surprise. He delivers a tin plate with a huge chunk of pink fish flesh gleaming and steaming before my eyes, stirring my tastebuds. I extend my thanks with a wan smile. Although he is

my cousin, he seems to have a crush on me lately, so best not to egg him on, methinks. His sheepish smile and slowly turning head twist away and he takes a handful of white fish seared black on its back and packs it into his gob, staring at his plate as he licks his fingers.

My father, Sean Murphy, pokes the fire with a long stick; glances at me for a moment with his usual twinkling eyes that have many secrets never to be divulged. A cold wave moves across my chest as he stares for a moment into my eyes. His robust body is clad in well-worn 1940s style baggy trousers, white open necked shirt, rolled sleeves and bright red silk neck scarf, with its folds near his stubbly chin, bends over the sizzling iron pan steadied by flat rocks where grease is floating like a happy lake around a pink fish caught in its undercurrent.

His ferocious, gruff voice declares:

“Nobody will go hungry today, eh? Not with the finest poacher in all the land right here. Aye, he’s been at it half the night, has our Rory, well done me lad,” declares father, slapping lanky Rory with his wispy pale fluff growing on his chin, dark matted hair and darting eyes, landing a good whack across the back making him buckle like a flying trapeze star ready to fly across a big top.

Laughter ensues and the conversation is happy on a fine, fresh morning in Springtime.

“What will we do today?” Mary asks the open question without expecting an answer, her busty figure with layers of garments covering thick thighs won during her confinement that results in two bonny boys, asks. Her eyes are focussed on her wild pair, still tumbling together moving the early morning dew with their energy-packed bodies. Her husband Jack throws

his arms around his bonny wife and she wiggles, pushes him away shyly. “Get off with ye.” His eyes are on her plump aubergine silk blouse-clothed bosom. Gold hoop earrings click and move as she rises and heads towards her boys, calling them to eat something.

I know what I must do. Collect all those ripe raspberries growing near the Barn. Dad will be happy with me then.

Later that same morning, Maeve, my step-sister comes running up to me as I am walking over to McCarthy’s barn to collect the berries for our supper. Her mother, my Auntie Maura, married my daddy after my mother died. R.I.P. Maura’s husband Bartholomew Smith already died too. So, I got a new mother.

“Niamh, guess what happened?” Maeve asks as her face turns red. Her red tartan shawl hangs loosely around her shoulders, showing a bare, smooth neck, garnished with gold chains, beads and amulets. Her

hair is dark as a raven's wings and glistening. Her dark sea blue eyes seem mysterious yet contented with everything that focusses on her. Her reigning petulant spirit is wiped away by her curvy smile that shows her even teeth, soft red young lips and tilted nose that often makes me wish I had similar features.

She explained to me once that these characteristics are attributable to the Murphy genetics, and I was a loser. She's glowing as a lighted candle in a dark night and I can feel her happiness burning in my heart as well as hers.

“What?”

“Paddy asked me to marry him. He gave me this.” She displays the copper bangle dangling on her wrist:

“’Tis engraved with a four-leaf clover. You've got the luck of the Irish,” I comment, shaking my head with envy.

“Soon I’ll be Missus Pádraig Flynn, to be exact. Wrong, they are, aren’t they?”

“Who is wrong Maeve?” I ask, mystified, trying to catch on.

“They say you are the pretty one. ‘She’ll be snapped up first.”

“Is that so, Maeve? Well, I always think that you are the most beautiful sister I could have. You know I envy your powerful genetics.”

“You mean that? Paddy thinks I’m the most beautiful woman in the whole world, so it must be true. My dress will be the biggest and whitest dress in the world too; spread that tale around.”

“As long as you’re happy, that’s the main thing.”

“I am very happy; the happiest woman in the world! You’ll find out one day!” She looks coyly at me as she says these words

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