

KATHLEEN

Fergus Walsh was walking home from the big supermarket on Regent Road with a full bag of shopping in each hand. He'd taken this route down the old Ordsall Road in his adopted home city of Salford more times than he'd care to remember. It had been an industrial wasteland for many years until the local authorities finally got a hold of things and began the re-building of the district. Now there were fancy new flats going up all over the place, taking the residential makeover that had begun in the Salford Quays development all the way up the river to within sight of Manchester city centre a mile or so away. But they still couldn't clean it up entirely. A young Asian lad had been murdered along this very road earlier in the year. They still had some way to go to change the hearts of some of the people who lived here, and Fergus prayed for them at Mass every Sunday. He had to take it easier these days owing to the arthritis he'd started to get in his knees and ankles, but he was determined that for as long as he could he wouldn't rely on his daughter Remedette getting all his supplies in for him. She had enough to do looking after him. He didn't want to burden her until he had to.

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He'd been seventeen when he'd taken the bus from the village back in County Wicklow to Dublin and then the boat over to England. He'd left his parents and half a dozen brothers and sisters behind. It was the year of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth, and his brother Dermot, the one who was always banging on about the oppression caused by the British Empire, accused Fergus of selling out by going to England. Dermot, on the other hand, had gone to America. He'd settled in Boston and become some kind of university lecturer. He'd always been the one with the brains, but the family had rarely seen him since although he'd come over for both of their parent's funerals accompanied by some Spanish looking chap called Eduardo. He'd never married.