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Her family was poor, quite poor. She didn't know it, of course, as a small child, but the knowledge had seeped its way into her, slowly, over the years. Not sleeping in the back of a car poor, or unwashed poor; just a childhood of grinding, unremitting unease. Nothing was easy, and she lived as if there was always broken glass underfoot, something to watch out for. There was food, but the food was always the same: fish fingers, peas, bread. There were no birthday parties, no holidays, for her family, and many times she missed out on other children's parties because her family couldn't afford a gift.

She slept in a little fold-up bed in the hallway until she was eight, the mattress about an inch thick, thin wire and thick metal frame close underneath. Her mother dragged the bed out every night, setting it up in the hallway, jammed right up against the front door. Each night without fail the wind would rattle against the door, jangling her dreams as she twisted perilously on her little bed of wire.

Though the father had a day job, he pissed away his earnings at the pub. They were close friends, he and the front bar, for every day after work he'd visit, devoted to its sweet sour smell, its smoke and blonde tiles, its ever-shifting yarns. Her brothers were often sent there to retrieve him. Her mother lived in denial, an incurable optimist who seemed not to notice the direness of their circumstances. Things changed slightly for the better when the girl was eight. The grandmother died, leaving the house to her only child, the mother. Now at least they did not have to pay rent. She slept for the first time on a proper bed, and her back loosened just a fraction as she stretched.

The girl was bright, a keen student. She was eager to learn, as if anxiety nipped at her from behind. She

excelled at literature, maths, languages. By high school she studied French and Spanish, and the teachers nodded approvingly. While her fellow students played sport and chatted about television, she debated, gave speeches, and read furiously. At sixteen her father took the children aside, told them he had something for them. He took three notes from his pocket, handing one to each of them, explaining that he had cleared out his bank account so that he'd be eligible for the pension. His life's savings, divided three ways.

The cheque was for one thousand five hundred dollars.

A modest sum, by anyone's standard, but here it was, the entirety of her inheritance. She banked it, immediately, modest as it was, and made plans upon it. She dreamt upon it, swooned upon it, prayed upon it, when she was not studying or reading or preparing for her exams. She took on a part time job, and saved the meagre earnings, delivered in brown envelopes every Thursday. She undertook her final exams, and when the results came through, few were surprised that she had topped the state in Spanish. Quietly, she withdrew her little stash of money, and bought a one-way ticket to Madrid. She said her farewells. Then the girl from the poor family flew away.

In Madrid she studied, trod cobbled streets, and sauntered the wide floors of the Prado almost every weekend. She laughed, drank a little, and learnt flamenco. She kissed dark eyed men. Many, many dark eyed men. The last I heard she was a government minister, with a husband and a young child. In her apartment there is a large, soft bed, with sumptuous pillows and flowing covers; and she stretches and sighs in it, sleeping soundly.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Megan Heyward.*