

Tragic mother 'hit her head on a stair gate'



Investigation: Rita Apine, 29

A MOTHER found dead in her home had hit her head on a metal baby gate at the bottom of the stairs, a postmortem has revealed.

Rita Apine, 29, was found at the bottom of the stairs at her home in Freshford, Co. Kilkenny, on Sunday.

Gardaí are investigating if she fell down stairs or was pushed. A security source said the postmortem was 'inconclusive' but revealed the woman suffered injuries from landing on a metal toddler gate.

'She appears to have hit her head on the gate at the bottom of the stairs,' the source said.

Gardaí believe the woman's toddler daughter was in the

By **Ali Bracken**
Crime Correspondent

house at the time and may have witnessed what happened.

Specialist Garda interviewers, in collaboration with child psychologists, may attempt to interview the 'traumatised' girl, who is aged almost three.

A senior source said: 'The young child was in the house. She may have witnessed what happened. Obviously she is very young so everything will be handled very carefully and sensitively.'

A man in his 30s, from eastern Europe, was questioned over the incident but was yesterday released without charge.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Simple, special words for our little miracles

THE words were so simple, yet when spoken with such passion they seemed to make the world stand still. For when it comes to words, nothing matters more than delivery. Winston Churchill knew this, which is why we remember him as someone who could move a nation simply by speaking.

I doubt the parent in question would thank me for comparing her to Churchill. But every now and then, you hear something so powerful that you may as well be listening to a great orator.

The parent was Gemma and she spoke at our son's First Communion last Saturday.

In the concluding moments of a beautiful and memorable ceremony, Gemma approached the altar and read, A Parent's Reflection.

Most of the congregation had already been brought to tears by the reverence of the boys as they undertook their various tasks. Then, just after they received Communion, Gemma spoke for us and, indeed, for every parent throughout the land.

In the midst of the daily flow, as we tend to their needs, we rarely take time to ponder the miracle that is our children. Each breath, laugh and word they utter is the sound of life so precious and extraordinary.

They are the handiwork of creation, the artwork of the angels.

The boys sat in their white robes listening to Gemma sing their praises: 'When you were born, our hearts were so full of happiness that there was no room for words.' In the beginning and at the end of life there is only silence.

It lasts only a second before the newborn cries or the bereaved begin to weep. But in that silence we bear witness to the mystery of human life.

As if from nowhere our children emerge, altering the direction of our lives forever. Their journey becomes our journey, their pain becomes our pain and their joy, our joy. We travel together hand in hand, offering every ounce of love we possess.

'When you were growing, our hearts were so full of care for you.' More often than not, we spoke soothingly, but if, on occasion, we spoke sharply it was because we were 'fearful for your safety'.

Gemma's words resonated widely, for what parent does not pass the

hours worrying about their children?

It is true that parents can sometimes be over-protective. However, I will always remember the wisdom of one lady who said to me after the birth of our first child: 'Why wouldn't you be over-protective? That little boy is the most precious thing you have.'

Gemma spoke softly, lovingly, addressing every word to each child in that church: 'Today, as we watch you moving forward with your friends, we marvel at all you have done and have become.'

'Our spirits sing praise to God for the gift that is you.'

A gift: that is what every child is, which is why, when they are treated cruelly, it is nothing less than a crime of the heart.

It may seem trite to say, but I have been blessed by my children. They have taught me how to love, how to live and how to laugh. For me, parenting is a process in which I learn much more than I can possibly teach.

'And though our hearts have stretched to love others, yet there is a place within us that is yours, and only yours. Always.'

No child is the same, each possessing their own identity and personality.

WHAT a miracle it is that each little being is so different, so beautifully unique. And it is this uniqueness that inspires such everlasting love.

Gemma's motherly affection settled on each of our sons. With supreme tenderness, she spoke for everyone when she said: 'For the light you have shone on us, for the life you have called us to, for the special gift of God you are now, and will ever be - thank you.'

Gemma left the altar to a silence laden with emotion.

We had come to celebrate one of the great milestones in our children's lives. And yet, Gemma reminded us that each day spent with our children is a special day.

Through them, our days are brighter and our lives so much more bountiful.

In them, we find our true meaning.

With them, we are made whole, for they give us a purpose beyond everything that fades and passes.

I smiled at my little boy and he smiled back at me. It was supposed to be his big day, yet he had somehow made mine.

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