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Guilt

by Sue Thompson

I feel guilty, God knows, about all sorts of things, but not about my husband committing suicide, what did he think he was doing, he had a wife and child to support. He went out on Saturday morning and that was it, I didn't know where he had gone. It was so unlike him to just take off and not tell anyone. Well that is what I told the inquest anyway, I didn't want the crowded court room, full of nousey tittle tattling neighbours to know my poor William liked his drink. They booed me outside the courtroom as we left; shouted at me that it was my fault, I had led him to kill himself, nagged him to death. I held my head high and walked right passed them. How dare they, they do not know what Edith and I have had to cope with. Once when we came home I opened the flat door to the smell of gas pouring out into the hall way, luckily I had smelled it before we lit the match to light the gas lamp. God knows what would have happened, burnt to death I suppose, then what would have become of him.

He had fought in the Boer war and whilst he never really wanted to talk about it I could tell from the look in his eyes it had been a horrifying experience for him, he had only been 19. At night the nightmares that he suffered were horrendous, the screams where so chilling I would hold him in my arms and stroke his face as if he was a baby. He would sob until there were no tears left. If only he had reached out to me and talked to me about it.

He came from Bicester and his father was a labourer a little lower in class than I would have liked, but you can't help who you fall in love with can you. He probably went in the army to better himself; he was like that full of big dreams. I had come from a well to do family, my father and his father before him had been sign writers and owned the business, we had servants. Then it all fell apart when not only did my father die but then my mother and several of my siblings. It was a dark time and that is where I think I yearned for someone to look after me.

We married in 1905, him in his army uniform. We moved into a tiny flat in Millbank. I took in washing and ironing and he was a Porter for his majesty's stationary office.

He would send me off to buy a jug of beer and I would spill it deliberately, so he only had a small amount left. Of course this roused the anger in him and he would storm off to the pub anyway. Still a few hours of peace.

Edith's birth was long and difficult. I nearly died. 'Never again would a man touch me' He never came into my bed again. Well you can't blame me can you?

Then to that fateful weekend, they came knocking on my door Monday morning to tell me he had been found on the railway line at Sutton at Hone station the porter had found him, head decapitated they said. There had to be a post mortem. Of course it was all in the papers, his death certificate read "Decapitation through placing himself in front of a train. Suicide whilst labouring under temporary mental derangement"

They threw eggs and flour at me after the funeral.

No I definitely do not feel guilty about it