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## A Knock on the Door

by Sue Hitchcock

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1977 we were living in a Victorian house in Hornsey, in the middle floor flat. Pete had gone back to work after the Christmas break, while the girls, who were aged five and seven, and I too, had another week until the beginning of term. We had no telephone nor even a front door bell, but with single glazed windows you could hear what was happening in the street. Maybe I was in the kitchen above the front hall, when I heard a knock at the door. I went down and a policeman stood there in navy uniform complete with the egg-shaped helmet.

“Are you Mrs Hitchcock?”

“Yes?”

“Is your husband epileptic?”

“No, you must have the wrong person.” I was beginning to shut the door.

“Wait! Your husband has been run over. He has had a fit and the surgeons need to know, if he is on any medication.”

“Oh my god! Where is he? He’s not epileptic. He doesn’t take anything. Is he alright?”

“He’s at the U.C.H. at Euston. I’ve got to go and telephone the hospital. Sorry I’ve got to go.”

I quickly pushed the girls into their coats and shoes and took them round to my friend, Frances. – good friend!

Who knows how I got to the hospital – I have no memory of it. The first memory I have is of Pete, still unconscious, left leg plastered from hip to toe and his face, swollen, bruised on the right side. It would be months before we could reconstruct the event and even longer till he could walk without crutches.

“He won’t wake up for ages. You might as well go home.” said the nurse.

“When he does wake, you know, he will be angry, very angry. It’s not personal, it’s just how he is. You’d better keep your distance, because he throws things.”

“There are only pillows to throw,” she laughed, “He’ll be alright. Look for him in the main orthopaedic ward tomorrow.”

As I travelled home I wondered if he would be his old self again. Should I give up my Teacher Training course? What if he couldn’t work? I would be the bread winner. I had to continue.