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My Guilt

by Sue Thompson

Guilt was waiting for me when I was born. He jumped on my shoulder clinging to me like a limpet clings to a rock. I felt him there nudging me whispering in my ear 'it's your fault'. But as I grew older guilt became my friend. He groomed me, moulded me until I could no longer think for myself.

I listened to him, loved him even. My life was purged into a dark foreboding of guilt.

The woman next door whose cat was run over filled me with a torturing feeling it was my fault, could I have prevented it? 'Of course' Guilt shouted, 'of course it was your fault'.

As I became an adult Guilt still sat with me waiting for the moment to pounce. The smallest insignificant thing would set it off. It was my fault my marriage failed, my fault my child had an eating disorder. It would laugh in my ear 'Guilty Guilty'.

I started to fall apart Guilt was everywhere I turned pursuing me relentlessly.

I was released from Guilt in quite a remarkable way in the end. The death of my father of all people.

I think my siblings and I had all suffered the feelings of guilt because of him. We all felt worthless because that's how he wanted us to feel. We felt guilty because we hadn't achieved a lot in life, he belittled us.

I felt a huge loss though when he passed away. My inner child crying out in pain.

But it was as we all gathered at the grave side that I felt a weight being lifted from my shoulder. I looked round and I saw Guilt retreating. A shadow fleeing in shame.

I wept for myself that day for all those wasted years I had let Guilt hold me back, for all the lost dreams that passed me by because I had listened to Guilt. People thought I was crying for my father but I cried for me, for my siblings.

We could now hold our heads up and walk forward without being judged. We could live the life we wanted with no shame.

Guilt was gone.

Sometimes I feel him lurking in my mind, trying to sit on my shoulder again. But I know he can't hurt me again, I am strong and the fear is no longer within me.

Guilt can no longer violate me.

I am free.