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My Perfect Husband

by Elda Abramson

My husband is perfect. And he has a PHD in English Literature to prove it. You see, reading all those books has given him a deep understanding of the human condition.

I was a little disappointed when he chose a flat for us in a near derelict house. It had once been a B&B for lorry drivers before it fell into such disrepair they rejected it. He really was against being in any way bourgeois and materialistic. These were ideals he not only read about but brought into his everyday life.

We had an outdoor loo and shared a kitchen with four other families. And we didn't have much in the way of furniture or heating. I shared my stove with an Irishman who thought he was a reincarnation of both Hitler and Rudolf Valentino. The only things he ever cooked were black pudding and bacon, leaving his frying pan to accumulate congealed fat that mice would leave little prints across every night. How is that for a bit of bohemian colour.

My perfect husband chose the perfect man for the subject of his PHD, the earthy, sensual DH Lawrence. I waited after my twelve-hour shift at the pub while my husband slaved away until midnight, transferring examples of blood imagery onto neat file cards. Finally, done for the day, he was exhausted, and all thoughts of Lawrence inspired activity was left at the bedroom door. At least I didn't have the problem of most of my barmaid friends, having to invent headaches to keep their beastly husbands at bay.

When I went into labour, yes, it did happen on the odd occasion, all was going well, I was young and healthy. So well that the nurse asked me to hold on for a while as the doctor had had a busy night, so could he just get a little sleep? The nurse left, secure in the knowledge I'd hold on. Pacing up and down by my bed was my husband, wringing his hands and exclaiming to the room, "I knew she was too good to live, I knew she was going to die."

When the nurse returned and swiftly ordered him to go and have a cup of coffee. I survived, the baby survived, and my husband was ecstatic I'd beaten the dramatic arc.