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## Keys

by Sue Hitchcock

It was a quarter past ten when I finally got home. I opened the door with my daughter's key and was greeted by a huge fly, buzzing around like a honda over my head. Flies are an irritation in the summer but this one was intent on me, like the dilemma, which was bothering me now.

I had had a long day at the hospital, trying to keep my husband awake until his dinner arrived. Now they were keeping his blood pressure down with drugs, he seemed to be more intent on sleeping than eating and was skinny, a skeleton with a clear complexion. When I finally dragged myself to the bus stop, the 1a was twenty minutes away, so I caught the first bus into town, hoping to get a bus home fairly quickly. Sod's law – three dodged me as I arrived and so walking seemed a better alternative. Exhausted, I felt in my pocket for my key, but it wasn't there. Thankfully the doorstep was in the shade and I sat searching my belonging for the essential item. No, no, and no again. There was only one thing to do, to phone my daughter, who had another. She was working, my granddaughter did not answer, but my helpful son-in-law rescued me, shared their meagre dinner with me and sat me down to wait for my daughter.

When she was due to arrive, I put on my shoes and jacket and habitually reached into the pocket. Eek, the key was there. What should I do?

All my life I have made a joke of my stupid mistakes, but making a joke out of losing my key was one thing. They had rescued me and I now felt shame that it had been for nothing. It wasn't that I couldn't take being the cause of their disruption and confessing my guilt. It was the second issue, that the kindness for which they deserved gratitude was mistakenly evoked. I was the boy crying wolf.

It was a split second decision, not to mention that my key had been there all the time and now it hung over me, like the fly pursuing me around the house.

In the end I shut the fly in the bathroom and opened the window. It was gone in the morning, but my guilt hangs on.