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SHORT STORY

(continued from previous page)

"Miss Fry have any gossip?"

"Nothing much. Family, doctors, relations mostly."

"And you mean to say you sat all afternoon talking about that and then walked her home?"

* * *

THEY ate their meal in silence and Mr. Edgar left his sprouts built into a pyramid on his plate.

"I was going to say to you," said Mrs. Edgar, "that we'd take that book back to the Clements to-night, but I won't ask you now when you are in that mood."

"Me in a bad mood. It's the other way about."

"Ever since you came in," said Mrs. Edgar.

"Did you cook the spuds for the hens?"

"Goodness, no. I told you Miss Fry came in as soon as you'd gone and I never had a chance with her about."

"Did you feed the hens at all then," Mr. Edgar almost shouted.

"Of course. Two tins of wheat before I left with Miss Fry."

"It's a wonder. It's just a wonder. And how many eggs?"

Mr. Edgar pulled out his pocket diary where he kept the egg tally. He wanted to see if hen-keeping paid.

"I forgot to gather them," said Mrs. Edgar.

"It's all you've got to do, Lil, and then you can't."

"I like that," said Mrs. Edgar stiffly.

* * *

MRS. EDGAR washed up and tidied the kitchen. When she went to sweep the floor she couldn't find the broom. That would give Bill something to growl about if he knew she'd lost the broom now. She lifted a shovel of embers from the range and carried them to the sitting room fire and soon has a blaze. Mr. Edgar stretched out on the sofa and opened his paper.

"It's very dark," said Mrs. Edgar, "but I am going to Clements by myself and I'll just have to take the torch."

"Do what you like, but I'm staying by the fire to read the paper all evening, that's what I'm doing."

"Of course I don't suppose you realise that you are terribly selfish," said Mrs. Edgar.

"Selfish, eh? Just because I won't go cahooting round all night with you after I've been out all day. You'd never be at home if you got half a chance. Why can't you be content like me. Sit and read."

"You seem to forget I'm here all day by myself and what company are you at nights, reading your beastly old paper. You resent my visitors, but you never tell me anything yourself."

"Now, Lil, don't work yourself up. Course I like you to have visitors and go out and have a good time."

"Looks very like it," said Mrs. Edgar.

"I know what I'd do with these strikers," said Mr. Edgar sternly, "I'd lock 'em all up. What they want is discipline. . . ."

"You never bring home any news from work, you never tell me anything."

"Never tell you anything. . . . Good God, woman, aren't I just telling you about these strikers."

"Oh, you just want a lot of sheep. No individuality or self-expression. I expect the bosses are just like you. Want everything your own way."

"Gosh, Lil, they say taxation is now 9/- in the pound and in 1935 . . ."

"Look, I don't care if it's 19/- in the pound."

* * *

MRS. EDGAR put on her coat again and wound a scarf carefully round her head, then she flicked the torch on and off to see if it worked. "The whole trouble with you women is that you aren't interested in anything," said Mr. Edgar.

Mrs. Edgar went out without saying good-bye and only hoped he would follow her and see how dark it was and be sorry. But he didn't.

Over at Clements they were all very bright and gay.

"Where's Bill?" said Mr. Clements.

"Bill didn't just seem quite himself to-night," said Mrs. Edgar thoughtfully, "Like he might be sickening for something. I thought he would be better by the fire."

"Lot of it going about," said Clements.

When Mrs. Edgar thought she ought to be getting back to see how Bill was, Mr. Clements wouldn't hear of her going alone, but took her right to the gate, although he wouldn't come on in and see Bill. He said Mrs. Edgar must come over again soon, they'd had a jolly time. Mrs. Edgar said that it had been a very jolly time and that she certainly would love to come again soon. It did one good to get about.

Mr. Edgar was still reading the same paper when she went inside. "Well, how'd the visit go?"

"Very nice indeed, thank you. Mr. Clements very kindly brought me home."

"What, that old geezer," said Mr. Edgar.

"Yes. I had a very nice time," said Mrs. Edgar slowly.

"Why didn't you stay longer then," said Mr. Edgar.

* * *

MRS. EDGAR sat down away from the fire and picked up a weekly which she had already seen, and went carefully through it again looking at all the society wedding photos and wondering if they were all perfectly happy. It took quite a time to look through it. Mr. Edgar moved to put another log on and she saw he had been sitting on *The Listener* and so she had forgotten to listen in to a play she had particularly wanted to hear. If he hadn't sat on *The Listener* on purpose she certainly would have remembered to listen. That would give him something to laugh at, if he knew.

Suddenly she felt quite tired and decided to go to bed. What a day. Spring too. She filled the hotty at the range and went off, banging the door with great finality.

She lay on her side and saw the stars through the unblinded window. They seemed to hang in the plum tree like Christmas decorations. Someday of course she would die. Her will was lying about somewhere. She must make a few new clauses or what did they call them, cod. . . . codicils or codicils. Like codas

(continued on next page)

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