

# For four years the guilt still haunted my mum

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



As we sat down for dinner or 'tea' as it has come to be called in our small two up-two down house, 174, Lonsdale Street, there was that same ominous feeling in the air that all too often filled me with dread and a sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach. That would set the tone for the remainder of the evening and most probably continue late on in to the night and early hours.

The hunger that now eluded my whole body had earlier been forced to become a mind over matter issue as I struggled fruitlessly with my maths homework, but now, tea was ready. Unfortunately though, my hunger was no more satisfied even after I had ravenously finished off every last bite of my half - yes my whole half - of the gourmet dish of Heinz beans and sausage, so expertly cooked - or rather opened from the tin - by Paul. This was another tell-tale sign of what was to come in the next few hours. As per usual, the rather bland evening meal was complemented by certain happenings in our house that even I struggled to deal with as I maybe would have done in the past.

By now, we had grown used to, and even begun to accept, the fact that Dad was no longer around to bring a sense of buoyancy and a friendly, smiling face to our home and our lives. Maths homework was left unfinished and certain D. I. Y jobs, such as the burst water pipe in the small dingy bathroom at the end of the landing, were left leaking. But we all understand that life must go on and we must stay strong - if not for our sake, for Mum's. This was something we had done very well since Dad left. Just the two of us, until she found Paul.

As soon as we finished our tea, Mum set about busily clearing the table as I put the kettle on, offering Paul a drink and anxiously awaiting his most-probable violent reaction. Much to my disbelief, he simply just declined the drink, but left the kitchen hurriedly, in a similar fashion to the one in which he had entered, irritably mumbling something about Janet and how he had had to put up with this for too long now and how he is not putting up with it for much longer.

With this, my thoughts and fears were confirmed and my heart pounded once again. It had been plainly obvious from the second I awoke that morning that they had been arguing the night before and it would once again be Mum who came out worse off. The atmosphere was tense all too often in our house. It was impossible to tell when things would boil over, but it was obvious that the tension was always at a light simmer, biding its time and appearing to await the perfect moment. It was for exactly this reason that I never invited any of my friends round to sleep or even to watch a film or for tea. The whole environment and aura is too aggressive, too heated for others to understand. In fact, everything that happens in our house with regards to this situation is kept to myself.

Just as the kettle boiled my mind jolted back into reality and I poured water in to each of the three mugs. I heard the front door close with a bang and the letter box swung backwards and forwards, probably hanging off even more than it had before.

" We shan't be seein' 'im again tonight," said Mum softly in her ever-calming voice.

" He'll be back," I replied tentatively.

" Oh, he'll be back all right. Drunk as a skunk, no doubt." She even said this in a subtle tone, as if she had seen it all before and was now finding the whole scenario increasingly monotonous.

I decided that the best reply, was no reply.

We sat in the lounge in silence. No sound apart from Matthew Kelly on Stars in their Eyes gaily welcoming some middle aged house-wife from Wales as Christina Aguilera. I glanced across at Mum, still glaring at the television intently, steel-eyed. She did not even look up, not a second thought. Nothing. Perhaps all recent happenings had hardened her to such petty behaviour...

When Gillian had finished her piece as Christina, I drained the remainder of my mug, said good-night to Mum and proceeded up the stairs that creaked more and more with each processional step higher, and to my bedroom. The only place of sanctity I could find.

After having only a wash due to the broken shower, I wearily clambered into bed and took out my football magazine from my bedside drawer. The last thing I remembered before dozing off to sleep was groggily reading an article about the demise of Spain on the World stage.

The lines upon lines of text slowly transformed into horizontal lines in my mind and became wood, lots of wood all lined up neatly, now vertical, forming walls. Fence panels. My eyes came into focus as I gazed around

what slowly materialized into a beautiful open space, lined with borders and rockeries immediately before the mahogany slats, containing amazingly colourful trees, plants and grasses that thrived in the gorgeous weather. Now my mind caught up with my vision and I recognised the setting as our old house. It was peaceful. Perfect. Birds chirruped in the trees and a plethora of insects busily went about their duties. Bees buzzed in and out of open petals and buds all around the garden.

Ladybirds landed gracefully on emerald green leaves and butterflies parading stunning spectrums of colour fluttered aimlessly in the gentle breeze. Beyond a finely pruned hedge towards the opposite end of the garden was a ray of light that glared brilliantly in my eyes. It drew me towards it with an almost hypnotic supremacy as I felt the heat of the beating sun on my neck. I stood over the pool and watched tiny insignificant creatures skate on the water's surface, backwards and forwards with no evident purpose.

Gradually, large elegant petals floated down from an overhanging tree, landing on the surface of the water charmingly. One by one they came down in to the water. At first with grace, causing minuscule disturbances on the glistening mirror-like surface, but with each descent came a larger and more portentous landing until the pool was littered with petals that gave the water a mystical purple-red glow.

At once - or so it seemed - the garden was silent. Insects and birds still seemed to buzz, sing and twitter contentedly in and around the garden, but

no sound. Silence. I turned back to the pool to see its emptiness. No buds, no petals, not even a single solitary blade of grass.

My eye lids opened with surprising ease to focus on the blankness of the familiar surroundings. Despite my disorientation, there were recognisable sounds from beyond my immediate surroundings. It took another moment for it to make sense. Mum?

There was a loud, ear piercing smash, followed by a thud then an emotional cry of pain and torment! I was right. All my thoughts and fears were so damningly correct, but what could I do? Was I to go down? My mind wavered. Could I help her, or was it not worth it? Would it only worsen the situation? Could it only worsen the situation? It did on the previous occasion.

Another loud scream later, followed by a familiar bang and it was over. He was home. Her haven. She whimpered in his arms, but he was oblivious. Immensely intoxicated by drink, he had fallen backwards onto the empty bottle on the table. Well, that was our version. Who would doubt it though? Her numerous breaks and bruises were plain for all to see.

For four years the guilt still haunted my Mum. And Chloe, the result of that fateful night.