

She Suffers

By Sara Shaarawi

[A group of women gossip]

Did you hear?

About what?

You haven't heard?

Heard about...?

Hear about....

Yes.

Of course!

Terrible, isn't it?

Terrible.

I always thought there was something about her.

Really?

Aye.

Didn't you?

Did you know her?

In passing.

I knew her.

Did you?

I did a bit, aye. Our kids played together in the park. We spoke a few times.

And did you ever...

Was there ever any...

Any what?

Signs?

What signs?

Did she seem... you know.

I think what she's trying to say is... was she stable.

I mean... it's hard you know.

Of course.

It's hard to tell... she seemed a bit depressed.

But not.... you know.

Not a murderer no.

That's not what I meant.

What did you mean?

I don't know... I just...

She murdered her child, right?

Right.

Then that makes her a murderer.

It depends.

Depends?

It depends on her state of mind.

What?

Anyone who kills is a killer, end of.

It's not that simple.

Would you ever...?

No!

If she was depressed, she should have gotten help.

Maybe she did.

What about her husband?

What husband?

I've never noticed a husband.

She was never married.

The father then.

Out of the picture.

Completely?

That's what I heard.

Even now?

Especially now!

So he has no responsibility?

We don't even know if he knows.

What difference does it make?
What if he could have helped?
And what if he made things worse?
How could he possibly have made things worse?
Was he supporting her? Legally he should have been supporting her.
What does this have to do with anything?
I'm just saying that –
Did any of us support her?
...
I didn't know her.
She's a neighbour, you chose not to know her.
Aye, and now we know that I was right not to.
This is grim.
It's terrible.
Terrible.
Why would she do something like that?
She wasn't right in the head.
Obviously.
But how could she...?
Melancholia.
What?

[Snippets of historical male expertise punctures the space]

I am of the opinion.
Black Melancholia.
Attack of hysterical mania.
Mental Derangement.
At risk of breakdown.
Exhaustion Psychosis.
Suffering under a delusion.
She is suffering.

[The pain of every mother who has taken the life of their child begins to seep through]

I'm afraid

I've hurt

I'm afraid my baby.

Hurt.

I'm afraid I've hurt

My baby.

I'm afraid

I've hurt my baby.

I'm afraid I've hurt my baby.

SSSSHHHHHHHHH...

Shut it out.

What?

These words don't belong here. This pain isn't ours.

Push it away. Now.

[the group of women gain control of the pain of the past]

No one says that anymore.

Says what?

Melancholia.

Depression, melancholy, psychosis, whatever.

She was always a bit... off.

Was she?

I think so.

How do you know that?

You could tell.

Did you ever speak to her?

No...

So you don't know.

You could tell.

You could tell something was wrong with her.

So what?

Yeah, so what if there's something wrong with her?

Lots of people suffer.

I've suffered.

Me too.

What do you mean?

What?

What do you mean you've suffered?

I've had my share of... you know.

We all have our problems.

Do we?

Aye. We all do. We've all suffered.

But we don't just...

We don't?

Have you?

What?

Have you ever...?

Ever what?

What are you asking exactly?

Had an episode.

An episode?

Yes, have you ever had... an episode.

What do you mean?

Have you ever felt like your body wasn't yours?

Or that you couldn't tell what was real and what wasn't?

Or that you knew deep down that you are the most terrible person that has ever existed and it's only a matter of time before everyone found out?

Or felt like absolutely everyone in the world hates you so much, even the ones that don't know you, so you wish you could scratch all your skin off and start over?

(silence)

[the pain bubbles underneath]

Well... have you?

[the pain spills over.]

My brain's gone!

It was sudden sudden sudden sudden
what happened.

What happened?

My brain... my bra my bra ins's gone!

Gone!

What made me

Gone!

I don't know what

what made me do it. I don't know.

With a knife.

I killed it.

With a knife.

I felt very depressed.

SSSSSSSSHHHHHHHHH...

[the women suppress the pain again]

That suffering is not ours.

Push it down.

It's not.

That pain... is different.

That pain...

Things were different then.

How?

I don't know... they didn't understand much about... women.

And now they do?

I think so.

I hope so.

It is 2023, it should be different.

Then why does their pain simmer at my fingertips?

...

Do you really think it was just depression?

Maybe it was post-partum?

They don't really prepare us for that, do they?

They don't.

I mean, they mention it.

But they don't... you know.

No.

No...

Do you know anyone that...

Someone who...

Aye.

It's scary, isn't it?

Did you help?

I did. I think I did.

Was it scary for you?

A bit. But like... it happens all the time. I was just worried for my friend, it was a very fragile situation.

What did you do?

I just made sure to be around all the time, cooked meals, looked after the baby, took her out when I could. Just you know... normal stuff.

Do you think she had someone?

Who? My friend?

No, I mean...you know.

Oh... her.

Had someone?

Do you think if she had someone then maybe she wouldn't have... done it.

I mean, she wasn't alone.

She could have asked for help.

It's not easy.

What's not easy?

Asking for help. It's not easy.

How do you ask for help if that's what you're thinking about?

Not an excuse though.

We all have our troubles, but we don't just... you know.

I'm not trying to excuse her.

No?

I'm trying to understand.

Trying to understand how a mother could do such a thing.

Maybe she wanted to.

Surely not.

Why not?

It's just too cruel to think about.

People do cruel things all the time.

But a helpless baby?

When it's your own baby as well.

Poor helpless thing...

Your baby!

Your pooooor....

Stop.

Helplessssss.....

Pooooor. Helplessss. Baaabyyyyyy...

Enough.

Sorry.

What was that about?

Sorry... I don't know. I don't know where that came from.

I was overcome with...

Did you feel it as well?

Yes.

...

Do you think it'd be better if it was someone else's? If it wasn't her own?

What are you talking about?

They die all the time.

Who dies?

Babies.

Babies die all the time.

They're killed all the time.

Stop that!

They are though!

She's right.

How can you say something like that.

Monsters, the lot of you.

Saying it so casually.

Disgusting.

Horrible.

Terrible.

Just terrible.

(a short moment of silence)

[the pain simmers]

What do you think will happen to her?

She'll get charged with murder.

Guilty.

But insane.

She'll walk free.

She'll get sectioned.

Definitely.

That's not free.

Aye.

She's not free anyway.

She'll be treated like a monster.
Surely not.
Aye she will.
She's committed an unspeakable crime.
The worst.
The worst thing a mother can do.
Absolutely.
Does it matter?
Of course, it matters.
The child needs justice.
She's killed her child, nothing matters.
Does anyone know if she's got someone?
Someone?
If she's got... you know... a person.
Like family or a friend.
Exactly.
She must have someone.
She must have.
Everyone has a person.
Imagine how they must feel just now.
Terrible.
Just terrible.
Imagine going through that.
Imagine if she doesn't have anyone.
No one?
Imagine.
I cannae even...
She did it though.
Aye, she did.
Did the unforgiveable.
She's just paying the consequences.

Who would have ever thought it?

What kind of person does that?

[historical male voice ruptures through]

I am of the opinion.

She appears to be a sexual degenerate.

A girl of solitary habit.

She is a girl of rather low intelligence, whose moral sense is weak.

She is of sound mind.

Confused in her statements.

Normal, but very depressed.

Guilty but insane.

[the women keep talking, interweaving with the ruptures, the male ruptures of the medical, the legal, the media]

Will you go to her trial?

Me? No.

Me neither.

Maybe we should?

I don't know her.

But maybe we should.

It'd be a good thing.

We all knew her.

Kind of.

I'm happy to see the back of her.

She's not a bad person.

[the male voice keeps going]

She complained that her brain had gone.

Her father laments that he is the object of scorn to the neighbours.

She has stated several times that she did not wish to live until she was forty years of age.

I AM MORALLY MURDERER – Claims Condemned Girl's Lover.

Condemned Girl.

Farmer's Wife.

Waitress.

Devoted Mother.

[the women keep talking and talking]

Aye.

Sick in the head.

They are.

Not a monster.

They must be.

That's a matter of opinion.

She's sick.

She's ill.

She's one of us.

Not an excuse.

It's not her fault.

Then whose fault is it?

She's not a bad person.

She is responsible for her actions.

We also have a responsibility!

[the male voices that shaped our past just won't stop]

She expressed the fear that she could not bring the baby up.

She now recognises the enormity of her crime.

I am of the opinion.

Proposal to liberate this woman conditionally.

She now recognises the enormity of her crime.

I am of the opinion.

She expressed the fear.

She expressed the fear.

She expressed.

[the pain now spills over]

Her pain is ours.

They said I was not good.

They used me. They used me. They said I was not good.

[the pain takes over completely]

I'm taking

taking

taking

taking this way

out of my troubles.

They said I was not good.good.good.

I am not to be

CRUSHED in this way.

They used me like a dog.

They used me

I'm taking this way out of my troubles.

Husband,

Husband,

Husband,

Husband,

I have done a terrible thing.

I have done a terrible thing.

People have been talking.

whatever are we going to do now?

who is going to look after my babies?

They have driven me to this.

People have been talking.

The neighbours say

The neighbours

The neighbours say

The neighbours say

so I decided to end it.

I hope the children are alright.

Husband,
Husband,
Husband,
Husband,

I have tried to ~~choke~~ the baby.

Oh nurse,
Oh nurse,
Oh nurse,
Oh nurse,

I have tried to ~~choke~~ the baby.

I am fed-up
with this
eternal

tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-
tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle. tittle-tattle.
tittle-tattle.

whatever happens now
is all my fault.
whatever happens
is all my fault
whatever,
my fault

This trouble has been long seated.

(actual silence)