

The Decorator

By Martin Brown

Pat worked hard and didn't stop to chat
but, when offered a cuppa, relaxed a little
and let his story come out. He came, of course,
from Ireland, moved away when his dad joined
the British Army. And once his own son enlisted,
years later, he knew there would be no welcome back.

His son, his only son, killed in the first Gulf war.
Pat joined the compensation campaign, got a charity set up.
Not that he wanted any himself, but someone had to make sure
the widows losing their army homes got something.
Three million quid was raised, and a big do,
with the Queen and all, was arranged down in London.
So he went, for the widows, and when he got there,
the Queen and the VIPs were upstairs with silver service,
while the widows and dependants sat downstairs
with plastic cutlery and a a cheap buffet.
Red-faced, full of this-won't-do, Pat strode upstairs
towards Her Majesty, respectfully, to voice his feelings.
Her polite smile endured before he, the red-faced Irishman
with a grievance, was discreetly whisked away and ejected.
His anger still raw, and no sign of the money going where it should,
Pat approached newspapers, offered his story, gave interviews,
had pictures taken, and waited. Silence, for days, then he phoned,
got told by apologetic newsmen that there was no story -
it was banned. Under the Official Secrets Act. Outraged,
disbelieving, undeterred, he continued to agitate, campaign, question.
Until, early one morning, a knock on his door, and four shadowy men
stood and pointed: *You! No more! Or you'll suffer! Get it?*
Although unsure how he could suffer more, Pat got it.
They left, unidentified, but he knew he was beaten.

He returned to his home town, to make up with his family,
But when they met in a bar, two men waving revolvers
stormed in and threatened people - why, it was never clear,
that sort of thing just happened, for no good reason, he was told.
So he finished with Ireland, for good. Now he's resigned
to England, the country for whom his son died,
the country that threatened him, and silenced him,
just for questioning questionable things.
And he makes a decent living, making
other people's houses nicer than they were.