



Lamb to the Slaughter
By
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A Short Story for ESOL & Functional
Skills Learners



Mary Maloney was a devoted wife. Every evening, she waited for her husband, Patrick, to come home from work. She was six months pregnant and very happy. The house was quiet and warm. The curtains were closed, and the two lamps were lit. Mary sat on the sofa, sewing a small white shirt. She looked at the clock frequently, waiting for the sound of his car.



When Patrick arrived, he was unusually quiet. He was a police detective, and he usually had stories to tell about his day. Tonight, he didn't kiss her. He didn't even say hello. He walked straight to the sideboard and made himself a very strong drink. Mary watched him with concern. She asked if he wanted dinner, but he told her to sit down. He had something to say.



Patrick spoke for a long time. He told Mary that he was leaving her. He said he would give her money, but he didn't want any fuss. "It's a bad time, I know," he said, looking away from her. Mary felt cold and numb. She couldn't believe his words. Her mind went blank. Without saying a word, she stood up and walked toward the kitchen. She felt like she was walking on air.



Mary went down to the cellar to find something for dinner. She reached into the big deep-freeze and felt a heavy, cold object wrapped in paper. It was a frozen leg of lamb. She took it out and carried it upstairs. It was hard and heavy, like a piece of iron. She walked into the living room, holding the frozen meat with both hands.



Patrick was standing by the window. He told her not to make dinner for him because he was going out. Mary didn't answer. She walked up behind him and swung the frozen leg of lamb high in the air. She brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head. Patrick didn't make a sound. He crashed to the floor, dead.



Mary looked at the body on the carpet. She suddenly felt very clear-headed. She knew she had to protect her unborn child. She took the leg of lamb to the kitchen and put it in the hot oven. Then, she went to the bedroom, washed her face, and practiced her smile in the mirror. She needed to look like a happy wife who was just coming home from the shops.



Mary walked to the local grocery store. She spoke to Sam, the grocer. She acted perfectly normal, buying potatoes, peas, and a slice of cheesecake. She told him that Patrick was tired and didn't want to go out, so she was making a nice dinner at home. Sam smiled and packed her bags. No one would ever suspect she had just committed a crime.



When Mary returned home, she ran into the living room and screamed. She called the police, crying hysterically. Soon, the house was full of men. Jack Noonan, a police sergeant and a friend of Patrick's, arrived first. Mary fell into his arms, sobbing. She told him she had gone to the shop and found Patrick like this when she returned.



The police searched the house for hours. They were looking for the murder weapon. "It must be something heavy," Jack said. "A large piece of metal or a club." They couldn't find anything. Meanwhile, the smell of roasting meat filled the house. Mary stayed in the kitchen. She told the officers they must be hungry and invited them to eat the leg of lamb she had prepared.



The officers sat in the kitchen and ate the delicious meal. Mary sat in the next room, listening to them. "The doctor says the skull was smashed by a heavy instrument," Jack said while chewing a piece of meat. "It's probably right under our noses," O'Malley replied, reaching for more lamb. In the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.