

Homecoming

"Have you come far?"

"Some would say so."

"It's nice to have a visitor. It's been such a long time."

"Yes, yes I suppose it has."

"It was different in the war, you know. Lots of people every day. How rude of me – may I take your coat and hat?"

"Thank you, I prefer to keep them on."

"My son was in the war you know."

"He was. I remember it well."

"Can I get you some tea? You look awfully cold. Or some brandy, perhaps?"

"No, thank you, I'm fine here by the fire."

"Oh. Oh well then. You know best. Is it cold where you've come from? Only that looks a very heavy coat."

"It was very cold at first but that soon passed. The birds are singing now and the poppies are flowering."

"How lovely. Have you come very far?"

"A long way and no distance at all."

"My son went away. He went all the way to France."

"But he kept in touch."

"He tried. His letters were so brief. He hadn't really time to say much."

"No. No, he had no time."

"Did you know him? My son?"

"After a fashion. He tried his best."

"Handsome lad in his uniform. Please, hang up your coat and hat?"

"No. It's really quite alright."

"They told me he'd been killed. Shrapnel in his head. Oh, it broke my heart."

"It didn't hurt for long. Mother, please don't cry. I've come for you. Don't you know me anymore?"

Afterword

Written in memory of the millions who gave their lives and lost loved ones in the First World War. Their memory never dies as long as we remember.

Originally written in 2013, this micro-fiction is hitherto unpublished. With the One-Hundred year anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in the bloodiest and most deadly conflict the world has ever seen, I have chosen to make this story public ahead of the compendium where it is due to feature.

J