THE OTHER TIME

by Peter Appleton

He killed a man
In a drunken brawl
They tried him, hanged him.
That was all.

But he left his wife
Nearly penniless
She was raven-haired,
She was glamorous.

She had swooned in court,
She had caused a stir.
And the editor of
The “Sunday Blare”,

Aware of his readers’
Appetite
And judging she should
Be worth a bit

Hired a snooper
Round to her house
With an offer she thought
Quite fabulous.

If she’d lend her picture
Lend her name
To a story about
Her life with Him

They’d write it up
From what she said
Did she understand?
She understood.

“I’ve never had much.
I’ve still less now,
I need the money.
The answer’s “no”.

As he rose to go
He noticed a medal,
Mounted and framed,
Above the mantel.

And asked her about it
Where was it won?
When did he get it?
What had he done?

“Oh, that,” she said.
“They pinned that on
The other time
He killed a man.”

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THE JOURNALIST’S VISIT

Scoop Appleton drove quietly up to the neat looking end-of-terrace house and sat in his car looking at the house for a few moments.
He did not expect any difficulty. She was a widow now and never left the house. Her parents had disowned her during the trial and her husband’s parents were both dead, victims of the same German bomb during the East End blitz in 1941.
Anyone in her position would be desperate for money. Everyone has a price. Scoop had learned that much in his time as chief investigative journalist on the Blare. The funny thing was that most people’s price was so pitifully small. Dangle a measly fifty quid in front of their noses and people round here would sing like a bird.
Lace curtains, he noticed. Garden small but respectable and carefully tended. He pushed the gate open and walked up to the door. The knocker was gleaming in the spring sun. He knocked and waited.
When she opened the door, Scoop barely recognised her. He had never seen her before but he had studied many photographs of her in the files and knew that she was good looker. Nothing he had seen had prepared him for the reality of her though.
Her hair was black as coal and shimmered. Her face was lightly made up, he noticed, but lacked animation. She was much shorter and slimmer than he was expecting and an urge to pick her up like a delicate tropical bird and protect her washed over him. She looked at him. Not blankly but without curiosity. He felt sure that he would have to start the conversation. She would be content to look at him like this on the doorstep.
“Mrs Evans?” he asked. “Mrs Rhiannon Evans?”

Now continue the story. You should try to get the following points in:

- Has she been well since her husband’s death?
- Has she been able to get a job?
- What has happened to her wedding ring? (Perhaps she has had to pawn it.)
- Did her husband drink? Hit her? Fool around with other women?
- Can we arrange for a photograph of her staring at his photograph?
- Has she met the wife and children of the man her husband killed in the brawl?
- What was the brawl about?
- Why had she and her husband had no children?
- What was the medal for?
- What does she think of this country’s legal system?

It is likely that Scoop would try to change Mrs Evans’s mind after she rejected his offer (the amount of which you should judge). Make his questions probing yet sensitive. Add some material at the end when she has shown him out. Try to retain Mrs Evans’s quiet dignity and make Scoop impressed by her. In his line of work he does not come across many people with her integrity.