He Drank

by Ed Higgins

He drank

Excessively. And this worried her, of course. But in WWII he'd been a tail gunner in a B17 Flying Fortress. He completed seven sorties over German occupied Europe. Over France he was shot down and declared missing in action, presumed dead. She spent most of the government insurance money then moved in with her parents in Bangor with her two young children.

noon's summer sun
line-dried towels
rubbing her shoulders

He had been wounded earlier in a Bremen raid, struck by flak twice in his right leg. So he had bad dreams when he came back from the dead. With shrapnel now in his back also, from German Focke-Wulf 190 fighters that shot down his Flying Fortress, shooting parachuting crew members as they drifted down over French hayfields. He also beat her up occasionally when drunk.

all these wars
both inside and out
the shifted earth

Mostly nothing terribly serious, some bruises, a black eye now and then. Once matted blood in her hair from a large cut when he shoved her against the door frame as she was coming out of the locked bathroom where she'd retreated to escape his rage. She thought he was gone but he had silently waited in the hallway for her to come out. When he grabbed her she fell backward cracking the back of her head sharply against the door moulding's edge. Her crying and the blood stopped his anger as he helped her up and

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back into the bathroom daubing the bleeding gash himself with a wet washcloth, repeating how sorry he was. She forgave him. The seven stitches left a scar and a slight bald spot.

All scars are areas of fibrous tissue replacing normal skin after injury or disease, and have inferior functional quality.

remembering once
she spent the night
crying in his arms