**The Stick**

**By Colin Foulkes**

Tom leaned forward, rested both hands on the cold headstone, bowed his head and, with a low moan, threw up. After the worst of the spasms had passed, he glanced around, fearing witnesses to this desecration. No one. The last of the stragglers had stubbed out their cigarettes and entered the building, and the morning mist would have muffled any sound of retching.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and reached down, rubbed it clean in the wet grass, then, lacking a handkerchief, wiped it dry on the lining of his suit pocket. The ache in his foot was worse; the painkillers he’d taken were now decorating the wet granite.

With a muttered apology, to Mary Adams, Loving Wife and Mother, he set off, limping, for the building. Should’ve brought the stick. Should’ve brought the painkillers. Should *not* have worn this suit. The suit was too small, he couldn’t remember when he’d last worn it, but had a horrible suspicion that it pinched under the arms even then, and god knows he was bigger now. A dark suit and white running shoes; *white*, for god’s sake, *white*.