



My hubby couldn't stop sleeping!

Stephen's raising awareness



My dozy fella was snoozing his life away

By Doreen Chapman, 55, from Overton, Hants

Walking through the front door one evening, I was overwhelmed by paint fumes.

I'd only been gone a few hours. Surely my hubby Stephen hadn't been decorating?

Besides, nothing needed doing. But there was a stepladder in the lounge and paint brushes strewn everywhere. And the ceiling was bright white.

Odd... Weirder still, Stephen was sound asleep in bed.

Later, when he woke up, I confronted him.

'Why have you been decorating?' I asked.

'I haven't,' he said, adamant. 'I'd remember if I had.'

The trouble was, he didn't remember.

It was 1983, and this sort of thing kept happening.

Though our house was gleaming, Stephen hadn't a clue he'd done the decorating.

So worrying.

We'd met at a school disco when I was 17 and were immediately smitten. He was kind, thoughtful and funny.

We got engaged, but as our wedding approached and we tried to find a house, Stephen started aching and felt feverish.

'It's nothing to worry about,'

the doctor had told him.

But Stephen was having vacant episodes, too. I'd ask him a question and he wouldn't realise I was talking to him.

And sometimes he slept for up to 60 hours.

Tests confirmed he'd a sleep disorder but, baffled, docs didn't know more.

He was sometimes

off from his factory job for two weeks at a time. It put a strain on us – he couldn't always play with our boys, after they were born.

As the years passed, his episodes were getting worse.

I'd come home to find pots and pans everywhere, chocolate wrappers scattered around – and now, the DIY.

Worse, when he woke, Stephen had no recollection of anything.

It was terrifying. And really upsetting for Stephen, too.

He became withdrawn, and we could never plan ahead.

Desperate, when he was 43, we went back to King's College Hospital and saw a consultant.

Eventually, Stephen was



My wide-awake hubby



diagnosed with Kleine-Levin syndrome – also called Sleeping Beauty Disorder.

It's a rare condition characterised by recurrent bouts of

excessive sleep,' the consultant told us.

He didn't know the cause, and there were no known cures.

'I'm just relieved to finally know what it is,' Stephen said. He was given meds to control the episodes.

He'd go seven to 14 weeks without a prolonged doze. Then he'd be out of it for days.

But we started picking up on the warning signs.

'I feel light-headed,' he'd say a few days before a turn. 'Like there's pressure on my head.'

During those times, we'd warn

work he'd be off for a few days. Luckily, they understood.

After an episode, Stephen would wake up starving.

Sometimes I was up at 2am, cooking him fried egg sarnies! Gradually, though, the episodes and excessive sleeping became less regular.

Now, it's been four years since he had his last extended sleeping episode. He's still on meds.

But Stephen, now 57, refuses to take it easy, wants to raise awareness of KLS.

'I don't want kids to sleep away their childhood,' he said.

We made leaflets about Stephen and KLS, and sent them

to local surgeries. We're planning to fundraise, too.

And hopefully, one day, my Sleeping Beauty hubby will wake up and actually enjoy doing DIY!

I'd come home to find he'd done DIY... but he wouldn't remember!



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