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## Settling a Score

by Zoé Carroll

Dawn sashayed across the sports hall. It had been decorated with fairy lights and enlargements of class photos from the classes of 1994. This year they were all turning 40 and the school reunion had been organised by a core of women who had once been the pasty faced and less popular members of the year group who had spent too much time in the library. Dawn knew that the social comparisons would have been made ahead of the event itself, people anxiously checking each others social media accounts and pretending to be friends with people that they hadn't spoken to in over twenty years.

People didn't really care what you had been doing since you left school, they just wanted to know that they were generally more successful than you. Dawn refused to feel inferior to anyone here. She was an accountant and was reasonably happily married to her childhood sweetheart, Karl Cummings.

"Oh Skinny knickers, there you are!" Her oldest friend Lydia came at her, bustling through the crowd, her ample bosom swinging about in front of her, "Got you some punch, it's ghastly but packs a real punch if you know what I mean." Lydia pushed the plastic cup into Dawn's hands and gave her a knowing wink, knocking back her own punch in one long gulp. Dawn smiled graciously, taking a small sip from the cup and wondering how she could dispose of it.

Dawn had noticed Natalie Rogan working the room and pretending to be everyone's best friend as soon as she had arrived but avoided getting drawn in too early. They had never been friends. When Natalie snuck out of the back doors for a crafty cigarette, she knew the time had come. Telling Lydia that she was off to the ladies, she slipped unnoticed out of the back door and watched Natalie from the shadows, making sure she was alone.

She was at the top of the concrete steps that led down to the basement underneath the sports hall, smoking in the same way that they had done in the fifth year.

“Natalie. I thought it was you, how lovely to see you,” Dawn announced her arrival as she gave a menacing grin and noted the discomfort on the other woman’s face as she recognised her. “I haven’t seen you since...” she let the intrigue hang in the air between them for a beat, allowing Natalie to clearly remember the occasion, “since you snogged my boyfriend Karl at the leaver’s disco in 1994.”

“Gosh, I’d forgotten all about that,” Natalie smiled uncomfortably.

She had been a complete bitch to Dawn while they were at school, she was such an easy target with her second-hand uniform and lack of dinner money. She opened her mouth to apologise but was shocked by the vicious punch to her throat that she didn’t see coming. She took a step backwards clutching her neck, she couldn’t breathe and was panicking, she had to get away from this madwoman.

She saw Dawn lunge towards her and felt another blow to her stomach before she felt her whole body lift violently from the floor and felt her skull smash into the wall behind the basement steps, and then she was falling.

Dawn watched as Natalie crumpled into the bottom of the stairwell, her neck appeared to be broken and blood oozed from the large wound on the back of her head, quickly forming a pool around her. She would certainly be dead soon if she wasn’t already.

Calmly Dawn turned on her heel and silently slipped back in through the door and re-joined the party. Twenty years of martial arts training had finally been worth it. She was glad that she had come to the party in the end, she had been wanting to get that off her chest for such a long time and now that the score was settled, she felt much better.