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## Spoilsport

by Sho Botham

I should have known it would end in disaster. I was told often enough. I thought she was just being an overprotective mother. But, I hate to say it, she was right. Why couldn't I see that? Why did I have to know better? She said I would end up in trouble and she was fucking right. I'm in shit right up to my pierced eyebrows. She didn't want me to have them done. I thought she was just a spoilsport.

Too late now. When did it all go wrong? Was it when I was at school and used to smoke at the back of the class? Or was it all the time I spent with the boys behind the old library? Or when we went across the fields with a few cans of lager and got a tiny bit pissed?

She told me it would end in tears. What did she say? First you borrow. Then you beg. Well it didn't end there, did it? Borrowing and begging didn't get me very far so then it was stealing. Stealing anything I could get my hands on. Yes, it was wrong but I had a habit to support and it came first. You don't get a habit the habit gets you. And you'll do anything to feed it. I did. I still do. She'd be ashamed of what I've done to feed my habit – I know am. You keep telling yourself, it'll be just this once. Just to get enough money for one last fix. But it's never enough. You always need more. There's another time, and another and another. And then another year has gone past and you find yourself in same sorry state that you were in the year before.

Only this time, you are not so attractive to the men who help feed your habit. The only ones who are interested are the drunks who are so far gone that they don't care that you are not so young, not so pretty and not so clean any more. Their money is about all I can count on now to get me what I need, what my body craves.

It is time to move on. The shop doorway will soon be full of busy office workers wanting their skinny lattes or triple shot espressos. I hobble down to the river walkway. Sometimes a kindly soul will throw a few coins into my hat lying on the ground. Then I can get a skinny latte if I can find someone who will go in to the shop for me - I'm not allowed in due to the state of me. I get it - I'm bad for business. I must be. Even I know I don't smell too good. My drunken clients must be well away if they don't notice the smell.

She's early today. The woman with the clickity heels strutting towards me. I held my breath as her perfume reached my nostrils as her open coat wafted past in the breeze. She didn't glance at me. She didn't have to. I would recognise my mother's perfume anywhere.