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If You Want People to Like You

by Miriam Silver

I wanted to disappear, I was sure I'd been seen by the very people who were pursuing me. I'd told a real whopper to the very person who not only meant well but had come up with an idea that would rescue me. However, it is said 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions' so I'll blame her, even though she made me face the reality of my grave situation.

Ivy, that is my long suffering friend's name had suggested, bless her, that I take advantage of my IT skills and go into business for myself. There was space out there waiting to be filled, she even offered her services as an unpaid assistant until I was established. There she was waiting for me in the coffee shop, ready to discuss it all, faithful, punctual to the last.

I knew it was impossible to refuse such generosity, she thought she had the answer to my problems, she understood my struggle and was sure that the distraction of running my own business would absorb me and I wouldn't have time to do anything else.

Of course she was right, but what she didn't understand was that gambling not only makes me feel in control of my life but I knew if you want people to like you, you had to spend money.

I didn't want to be distracted, I enjoy the thrills, the possibility that I'd be able to buy anything for anyone, give a long wanted holiday to Ivy, move from my rotten flat. I never at any time recognised that there were so many successful betting shops out there, I could not resist the pull of the horses and machines, I was sure I would win, soon, one day.

It was boredom and my brothers that made me take this path. My parents' expectations of their children was through the glory those boys brought with their football. All I ever did was stand on the sideline cheering. I wasn't any good academically either, my teachers always compared me to my successful brothers which didn't help my self esteem.

Ivy was in my year at school, we did everything together, shared my lack of interests, provided cover for me when I was out late. We even went to work in the same supermarket. Another disappointment for my parents.

“Gotta date,” I would tell my mother, when in fact I was off up to the bookies.

In my spare time I studied ‘form’, put my hard earned money on the horses, even borrowed from Ivy and eventually from loan sharks. Ivy’s savings didn’t come anywhere near repaying them.

It was when I was being pursued and threatened by the guys wanting their money, the interest increasing by the minute, Ivy hadn’t any more to offer, that was when she’d come up with this idea of me running my own business. She had an inflated idea of my own skills, I don’t know what she saw in me anyway, me, a loser, there was only one thing to do, that was to disappear. Everyone will be better off without me. Too much of a coward to do ‘you know what’.

And that is what I did. Never been back. Moved right away up North, to the sea, took any work, mainly on the boats, can’t get to the betting shop while at sea, don’t go ashore often, they’re still looking for me. Poor Ivy, she did mean well, hope she didn’t wait too long.