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## Coming Out

by Ivor John

Even before he had put the phone down, he could feel it. That feeling of panic and apprehension of overwhelming doom. That sense of conviction of impending horrors, but none that he could quantify. When, years ago, he had in the end agreed to speak to a therapist his parents had held optimistic hope that he could encourage her to eat and to stop cutting her legs with broken glass. As well as the panic there was nausea, which back then he had welcomed as a way of emptying her stomach without having to put her fingers down his throat.

Staggering slightly, Phil reached out his hand out to catch himself, in doing so, knocking a cereal bowl from the table onto the floor. Weetabix and warm milk staining the beige recently fitted carpet. 'Shit shit shit'. His annoyance, dissipated quickly when she realised that cereal on the carpet was trivial. The news she just been given, that dreaded news, brought back those events that he knew could never be forgotten. He had tried to keep them out of his mind, to avoid giving them the oxygen of thought. Some of the time he had even managed it.

It was not completely out of the blue, but was devastating none the less. It didn't help being in the newspapers every time Pitchfork's parole was considered, in 2016 and 2018 it had been rejected. But the telephone call, was to say that this time, it had been accepted. He would be released. It was the families' solicitor who had called.

Thirty five years ago, 6 July thirty-first 1986 he had argued with his little sister, Dawn, joking with her gauche attempts at make-up. She had been murdered, on her way home, from visiting her friend. He imagined they would have talked about boyfriends, he knew she smoked cigarettes. She loved the Pet Shop Boys, West End Girls had been in the charts, 'sometimes you're better off dead, there's a gun in your hand and its pointing at your head'. Prophetic?

He only wished there was karma, a higher power, what goes around comes around, but if there was ever a doubt, this proved that that was not true.

The man who had abused and murdered his little sister would be out, breathing the same air as him and his family. Decent ordinary people. How could that ever be allowed. Dawn hadn't had a breath since that awful July day which he had remembered, everyday for the last thirty five years.

He wondered who could have decided to let him free. He imagined he didn't live in Leicester. He wouldn't spend every minute of every day wondering if he would see the person who killed his sister by the checkouts in LIDL. The murder had been a catastrophe, but it was the daily memory, which had worn him down, made him agoraphobic and alcoholic. Any idiot can face a crisis; it's this day-to-day living that wears you out