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## Out of Luck

by Miriam Silver

You think it will never happen to you, becoming an addict, a deceiver, leading everyone up the garden path. Which is what I do by getting up, going to work, living and socialising every day, in effect I'm a complete fraud. Very clever I am, living in hopes of the big win.

They, my wife and parents all think how prosperous I am, happy marriage, living in an Edwardian villa with latest possessions, and children enjoying expensive out of school activities, overseas holidays. It's all there for the world to see.

Only there's no time left, I've outrun my luck, that big loss last night was my last hope, gone. If I'd won I know I would be in the clear. The cards were against me.

Now they are threatening me, the payday sharks, credit cards and the bank all insisting on repayment of outstanding debts, addressing all their demands to the PO box from where I conduct my other life.

Liz, my wife believes household correspondence is dealt with by me directly from the office. Unbeknown to her, I'm an IT expert needing access to my mail at various locations, where in fact all my bills are addressed and of course ignored by this duplicitous rotten husband.

I know, I know, I'm a selfish bastard, Liz, to whom I'm devoted has been such a wonderful partner, helped me get 'clean' while I was coming off drugs, that was when I'd sunk to my lowest, when I stole child benefit money, she thought she'd had her purse stolen in the super market while the two year old was having a tantrum.

I've gone too far now, there's no way out, I'm an addict, I'm obsessed. She thought I'd left all that behind me. Always supported me. She'll be devastated. My in laws can't help me either, I gambled their money which was meant to pay the mortgage. I fooled them, they never believed a professional man would cheat. Neither did my Dad who was so proud of his lawyer son.

The bailiffs are due today. No bills have been paid. No one left to borrow from. We will lose the house and it's contents. Perhaps as I'm so far down, my luck must turn, maybe I'll...

Inevitably, unable to resist, I go out, knowing it's win big time now or, god-help-me. Putting all thoughts of Liz and the children out of my mind I tread my well-worn path to the betting shop where derelict Bob, a member of my gambling fraternity was waiting for me.

"Gotta couple green ones mate?" he asked, rather piteously as I approached.

Through the gloom of the drizzle I could see he looked not only wizened but was disheveled.

Obstinately impervious to his state, resisting any comparison I knew I must find a way out and be quick about it, otherwise, well, I couldn't let myself even think about those possibilities.

I had nothing to give him, anyway he knew that I'd over run my limit, even in there they wouldn't welcome me.

"Big boys promise me a cut if I collect something from you- just enough to keep em quiet yer know, you'll make it big in there and help me," he sneered using his thumb to indicate the shop I knew so well.

"Can't tell you too much, got real contacts, I swear you'll get your share, I know I owe you just give me today."

"Ok, for old times sake, but I'm not kidding, those two big fellows carry guns won't wait," he threatened as he sidled off leaving me outside, Hesitating, I got wet resisting the lure of the warm dry inside where, this time I was sure I would make it big time, I was convinced that was where I could save us all.

Who was I kidding? They're not stupid in that shop, seen it all before, losers like me.

My legal brain knew I had to report those guns to the police, maybe they'd get them off my back, which I did and vaguely mentioned my problem but was only sent home to "get sorted". Not even grateful. Don't know what I expected.

Hopelessly dispirited. There was no way out, I'd let everyone down, I'm seriously useless, an addict, addicted to gambling, always going to be addicted to something. Face it, never going to change, can see me as a down and out, living in those shelters like him, dependent on thugs, where I'll drink my way into oblivion.

For a coward like me, at least I can still consider Beachy Head.

