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I Lived Only For The Moment

by Miriam Silver

After a protracted period of living within my own head I was determined to do just enough to keep them happy and give me time to plan my future.

I had already forgotten all that had happened and all that lay ahead. I lived only for the moment. No one here knew anything about me or my interests, I was careful to deflect any questions either from my employers or colleagues.

Long ago when I had to stand on the side line, in the cold and wet cheering as if I was interested, no one knew I couldn't care less who won that stupid game, I was just one of the many bystanders, stamping her feet and wishing she could leave. Although at that time I was living with my family in a comfortable home, which in retrospect I should have appreciated.

Now here I was living alone under the care of strangers who I have to visit weekly. They, the social services who have graciously provided me with this moth eaten unfurnished studio flat, which is my base while working in a packing shed, at the beck and call of a surly manager who obviously receives bonus money if we exceed his superiors' expectations and keeps us running to fulfill the criteria on his clipboard.

I was the youngest of three who lived in suburbia behind curtained windows. There we kept ourselves to ourselves, Mum and Dad both working hard provided food and shelter, never more than that. It was like living in a pod in space where we were isolated behind the TV soap all provided for basic rent payable as soon as we went to work.

The other two, Barry and Tom five years older than me, twins who seemed self sufficient, happy at school, at work, now living with partners. Leaving me the only one left in this dreary house where I listened to their disapproval of my brothers, while in my simple way I became obsessed with making enough money to move out and up.

I didn't like school, wasn't popular or really interested in learning so I had opted for work behind a desk where I became a dab hand with the computer, eventually buying my own, quickly learning to use those search engines, play all sorts of games and eventually finding the gambling app, all too simple to do on line, tap key and live in a world of hope and excitement. Each time I turned on my computer I knew that this was the day I would make the big win. Credit cards helped me on my way, though not to what I'd dreamed about.

The parents thought I had some one special in my life because I was more out than in, unbeknown to them of course I was in one of the numerous betting shops available in my area.

The machines was where I lived another life with every coin I dropped into them. I even studied form, betting on the horses. Never learning that it was only the loansharks who won, which they did, because I went to them regularly until they threatened even chased me, eventually making impossible demands on shocked parents who couldn't or wouldn't pay of course.

I was sent to prison for 9 months to my family's disgust. Which of course gave me a criminal record. Never again going to be able to get credit, no cards and no job taking all my dreams of the big win with me, behind bars. Outlook poor. Disowned by all.

That was a long time ago when I was young and stupid, prison is no place I want to return to even though while there I did learn to cook. Maybe I'll be able to move on soon.