

## Love Lost

This time his father punched him in the stomach so hard that Jason collapsed in a retching heap, trying to force air into his straining lungs.

“Get up you big sissy, I didn’t hit you that hard.” His father stalked into the kitchen where his mother stood quietly by the stove. She had heard the loud exchange but years of abuse had cowed her into a submissive silence. Her ability to stand up to him had disappeared years ago in a welter of physical and verbal abuse.

All she said timidly was, “What would you like for tea Michael?”

“I don’t want any of your bloody awful slop Claire. I’m off to the pub for a bit of peace and quiet.”

Claire went upstairs. Jason lay curled up on the bed sobbing. She put her arms round him but he pulled away sharply. Raising his tear-stained face he fixed her with a look of contempt. “Mum, why do you let him hurt us all the time?”

“If I try to stop him it will only get worse. You’ll have to try harder not to annoy him.”

Michael jumped off the bed and shoved her. He was big for his age and she staggered back. “You’re my mum. You should protect me,” he screamed. “All I did today was bump into him as I was coming through the door and he went ballistic again. “

He pushed past her. Moments later she heard the front door slam. She sat on his bed in a state of utter desolation. Her inability to confront Michael had driven a wedge between her and her son. *“I’ve lost him,”* she thought. *“If I can’t protect him as his mother I don’t deserve his love.”*

Claire had realised that Michael’s physical attacks were increasing in frequency and intensity. She was terrified that one day he would really hurt her only child. She’d already had to invent stories to explain Jason’s bruises to her mum when she visited recently. Earlier on Michael had been careful to hit both her and Jason where it wouldn’t show, but lately he’d been indiscriminate in his physical attacks.

She dozed off and when she woke up with a start it was pitch black. She had a feeling that something awful had happened. She was relieved to see Jason

sitting at the kitchen table. There was a blank look in his eyes that frightened her.

In a flat, emotionless voice he said, "He won't be hitting us ever again Mum."

Her hand flew to her mouth. "What have you done?"

"What you should have done years ago. I've killed him. I waited outside the pub till he staggered out and I hit him with a brick when he got onto the canal tow path. I shoved him into the water and he didn't come up again."

The murder case was never solved but the rift between mother and son did not heal. Jason left home two years later when he was sixteen.