



CELL – CLOUT

By Paul Smith

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JEZ – 24

A bare police station cell. A bench with a plastic covered thin mattress. A few magazines and newspapers. Dull lighting. JEZ lies on the bench. During the monologue he moves around a little, nervy. He is scruffy and unkempt.

“Nothing will ever become of you. You are useless. A waste of space.”

Is that what Mum’s tell their kids?

Not helpful.

Not when you’re 8 years old.

Not ever.

You don’t forget words like that.

Then they’re repeated. Regularly.

On my 11th birthday I got a verbal lashing and a clip round the side of the head ‘cos I wanted a bike. I got nothing. Not even a card. Just a bleeding cheek. Scratched by her ring. Wedding ring – but not a wedding ring at all. Never married. Died with nothing; up to her neck in debt.

But she was right of course. Never have made anything of my life. In and out of homes. Detention centres. Known to the authorities. Card marked.

“Never give up completely.” That’s what Reverend Mason always said when he came to speak with us at St. Clements – a halfway house. It was one of the better places. Some were shit. But what do you expect? Luxury? You steal from others and you’ll be dealt with accordingly! I stole. I suffered the consequences.

You never ask to be forgiven as people won’t.