

Filth

by Matt Potter

“Get ya hands outta there, ya filthy old cunt!”

I look up, his distorted face hurling more abuse.

Blurring my eyes, I look over the roofline of his fruit and veg store and to the sky beyond. Then back down into the bowels of the rubbish bin.

His anger floats over me as I fossick inside, Wednesday gloves black with grime. Thursday's, Friday's and Saturday's pairs, washed and dried, sit in wait beside my front door.

Newspapers, a banana skin, fast food wrappers and then gold! A soft drink bottle, two cans and — lucky me — three iced coffee cartons. We get a refund on those here too.

“Take ya fucking trolley and ya shitty bags and fuck off!” he yells.

Why doesn't he uproot the rubbish bin from the footpath, if he doesn't want me here? No one else would blame him.

I straighten my back, and push the bottle, cans and cartons inside the plastic bags in my trolley. Then I stare at him, my arms hanging loose at my sides, my polyester frock — my work uniform — worn and faded. And I flash him a smile, sucking my gums: I keep my teeth at home.

“I could be your mother,” I say.

His jaw drops at the sound of my voice.

Grabbing the trolley handle, I push it up the street. Home is fifteen minutes walk. Once inside, I'll sort out the takings, shower and change, and play Mozart on my iPod.

