

# loose ends

*by Susan McCreery*

Not a pretty sight, his feet, thought Alan. Pale toes bristling with ginger hairs. Nails in need of a clip. His coffee arrived a few seconds later. Alan couldn't quite believe the luxury of sitting in a café on a Thursday morning. It was all thanks to China. Cheap manufacturing. He'd never been to China. Never been anywhere. His feet were starting to take on a mauve tinge. Too early in the season to be wearing thongs – Judith could have told him that. 'You need a jacket,' she'd say. Uncanny ability. Always a brolly on hand if it rained. Like a bird about weather was Judith – the way they cut the cackle before a storm. Or carry on like a circus on a warm bright morning. 'Just a t-shirt, I reckon, love. And a cap.' The spoon was clean, shiny. The coffee at work used to stick to the teaspoons like gobs of brown cement. He missed the staffroom. Fifteen years. Alan looked out the window at the passers-by. How many of them were out of work? What would he do for the rest of the day?



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