

50-WORD STORIES

An opportunity lost

He fell from the ladder and landed with a dull thud. An onlooker may have easily misinterpreted Shona's scream and swift dash as the response of a dedicated rescuer. But her bloodcurdling wail was for an opportunity lost rather than heartfelt compassion for someone in need of urgent medical assistance.

A lost opportunity

The slightest glance into his father's eyes brought on a need to say what he had always wanted to say to him. Three simple words; *I love you*. For some unknown reason he could not say them to save himself from the humiliation of never having said them at all.

To Change My Mind

How can I explain in fifty words? It's all I can send with this spell.

You must NOT marry him: he never loved you. Not now, not ever.

He wants your amulet, your magic, your lineage. He plans to tear apart the fabric of time.

Signed:

Yourself,

three years hence.

Writer's Curse

Dear mother and father,

I was cursed, with the foulest magick, of a wretched witch. If I write any proper name, the one so named dies, as soon as ink dries. Innocently I wrote letters. Brother, sister... They are dead. I cannot bear my guilt. Forgive me.

Love forever,

Estelle

Revenge, a dish best served cold

'Waddya mean you've changed your mind.?? You can't do that. Anyway, it's too late. You've had the drink.'

'Oh, but I can. I found out that you failed to give me the message from my doctor that I'm in remission. So I swapped the drinks. Enjoy the hereafter pet.'

Daisy Chain

Sitting immersed in yellow daisies, Meg and I gently break the stem, pierce a hole in each end. We thread one into another ever so carefully as if they were diamonds. The last flower to complete our necklace. A symbol of a friendship that should have been unbreakable.

Indifference

His suit was dishevelled, and he looked stunned as his briefcase fell open, sending a pen and an apple down the aisle of the bus.

"Please, God!" he shouted, bursting into tears. "Just one thing!"

It was a bit much. I would have just picked the pen and apple up.

Time, Please

Alice was putting the final touches on her blueprint when Death arrived. All her life, she'd planned for the moment: the things to say, the metaphysical bargaining chips. Alice had one goal: defeating Death with irrefutable arguments. Only half a sentence still needed to be tweaked when he showed up.

She came to me again last night. Her lips an unspoken need tasting of cherries and summer. Silken hair spilled through my fingers as we embraced. The warmth of her skin smelled of apple blossom. I wish I hadn't lost my sight so I could see what she looks like.

Grandfather's yard. My dirty hands dig out a glass bottle so old and weathered I can't see inside. This might be it? He'd told me bedtime stories of healing potions - as if he'd really been a wizard. Cork crumbles from the stopper, something effervescent glows within. This might save Grandpa!

"Tobias John Elliot! If you don't get here right now, I'm going to skin you alive!"

"No you're not."

"Who the - who are you?!"

"I'm your fairy godmother."

"...Bless me. Help with my disobedient son!"

"I will: I hereby bind you to everafter execute your thoughtless words exactly as spoken."

Incessant barking outside.

Hop-scotching barefoot over prickles, I enter a stand-off between terrier and serpent. 'Stay,' I command one, while keeping watch on the other.

Snake eyes lock onto mine, forked tongue tasting my presence, testing my character.

Tension escalates. Sweat drips. *What now?*

Sensing my fear, it slithers away.

Standing atop the rugged cliff Alice looked out to sea. She turned, with grey eyes penetrating Jim's jagged soul. "Did you?"

"Yes."

Hope sought now, illusory. Together they saw Jim's wife momentarily as waves latched onto her lifeless body sprawled on the rocks below, pulling her further out to sea.

Multi focal insect eyes covet the salty jewel drop. The pink beneath its feet swells then contracts so it takes flight. Riding alternating currents of oxygen and carbon dioxide it lands higher. But this pink also twitches. Far beyond insect perception the land mine pressure plate edges closer to release.

The smell of the mansion's interior hits me first—a meld of odours from times past. Not musty ... *old* ... as if I'd opened a wardrobe and sunk my face into ancient clothing. Then comes the sudden drop in temperature and gloom. Shadows move, take shape. Voices echo around me. 'Welcome.'

Where's Husband?"

"Shopping," I explained yet again. "He'll be back soon."

"Oh...what's your name?"

I smiled weakly. "Kathy."

"Ka-thy," she said slowly as she glanced at a nearby photo. "I...had a daught—"

"Woof!" The dog barked, breaking the moment.

After petting him, she looked at me. "Where's husband?"

"Dancing with the rusalka is death."

But his mother went willing.

And as he watched through the cracks, the darkness caught fire. And they spun, flesh stripping from her bones.

"Do not be afraid. God doesn't love you anymore. Not like a rusalka."

And they both went up in flames.

On Tuesdays it was especially hard to find a good dumping ground for bodies. He wasn't sure why that was, but as he saw another headlight appearing behind him, he felt only despair. He sighed and kept on driving. He really should have chosen another night to kill his mother.