

The Good Storyteller

by Terri Mullholland

Shortlisted, Edinburgh Award for Flash Fiction 2024

You're telling me a story like the good storyteller you are. But you're playing hide and seek in the spaces between words. In the gap between where the story starts and where it ends you're dancing around, drawing things out.

I'm impatient. I want you to get straight to the heart of the tale, the meat of it, the bit where things happen.

But you're taking your time, carefully setting things up, laying the table for the Once Upon A Time. You're straightening the tablecloth, arranging the plates, the glassware – getting everything ready to bring in the Happily Ever After on a platter.

You've even put a vase of wildflowers on the table, picked just for me in the woods this morning. But I'm still waiting for you to get past what happened after you entered the woods and followed the path to the cottage. What happened after the wolf opened the door?

I know you must have escaped because here you are, telling me the story as you polish the silver cutlery.

But now you're setting out a knife and fork at a place setting for one, and you're looking at me with those hungry eyes, and I realise you're not going to tell me what happened next. Like the good storyteller you are, you're going to show me.