

An Introduction to... Flash Fiction

Flash Fiction Example

Scrambled Eggs

He stared at the scrambled eggs. They lay there, cold and congealing: a metaphor for his heart. Once, she had made him breakfast; she had set it before him every day, carefully placing the china plate, the knife and fork, the condiments. Each mouthful had been a testament to her love for him; a physical manifestation of her solicitude. How could he have swallowed those breakfasts so carelessly? He had gobbled the toast, chewed the bacon, gulped the coffee, never realising that each serving was bringing him closer to the time when there would be no more.

He pushed the plate aside.

It had been a gradual decline. First, burnt toast. Then raw sausages, eggs flecked with pieces of shell, tomato sauce sprayed onto the tablecloth. That had been the final straw, the indicator that something had to be done.

In the care home, the breakfasts had been basic. Toast, corn flakes, the occasional treat of muesli "to get the digestion going". She had stared at the spread in bewilderment, not understanding such barren, thoughtless fare. It was a new world to her: one she had been imprisoned in.

She had thrown her bowl one day, repulsed by the slimy mess of cereal, so far from her carefully prepared plates of bacon and egg. He'd picked it up, apologised. "No harm done," said the unsmiling nurse. "They're made of plastic, see?" He'd put it back onto the table, his heart aching for the delicate trailing-rose patterns of his childhood. He looked into her eyes, and he could see she remembered, too.

Just for a few seconds, and then it was gone.

The next week, she had hurled the toast rack at the wall. "Breakfast in her room might be better," explained the warden, "We don't want to upset the other residents." He had gazed at the dining hall full of empty shells: like eggs, cracked, broken and then scrambled, sitting in their plastic chairs, staring into space. He wondered what it would take to upset them in their distant worlds. More than a toast rack, surely.

The final visit, last week, she had been in bed, her wrists strapped to the metal sides. "We can't have our staff attacked," explained the warden, his eyes stern while his mouth smiled. He'd left them to it then, closing the door silently behind him.

He'd sat beside her and talked to her of his favourite breakfasts. The muffins she'd made, the pancakes on his birthday, the eggs benedict at Christmas. She stared at him, unseeing, and he watched for some glimmer of remembrance, some flicker in her eyes.

Nothing.

He had kissed her goodbye before he picked up the cushion. He could still feel her forehead against his lips, paper-thin, guarding a life-time's recipes inside a scrambled brain.

Back in the present, he stood up and took his untouched plate to the sink. He paused to adjust his funeral tie in the mirror, before going out of the front door.