

A Selection, Six Stories Penned by R.L

Includes Samples and Short Stories

'I Write Fairytales' (Non-fiction, Sample)

When I say,

"I write fairytales."

I think people want me to be embarrassed.

Cynical, am I right? But it is what they think, because who are you, really, if you write fairytales of all things? The world is so big, huge actually, and everything is constantly falling apart, piecing itself back together and you choose to what- hide away from the problems and the wonder in kids stories?

Escape everything.

People say that a lot about fiction, that you open a book or write a story and you dive into the 'it's made up'-ness of it, and suddenly you are ignoring the here and the now. You escape and you are a coward, not willing to face the vast and the true. But what I love about fairytales, like really love, is how with them you are not ignoring anything.

You are away with the stepmothers, the fairies, the heroes and the witches, and yet the reality is still right next to you. Not as the ghost haunting the crumbling manor, but as the ghost of an old friend, gently nudging you from where you dwell beneath the sea, to what you long for on the land. Because fairytales are all morals, are all, "Don't trust the Wolf little girl, because the Wolf is a stranger, and strangers will eat you alive!"

Fairytales are told as warnings, fantasies that do not ignore the reality, but encourage you to acknowledge it! To bellow,

"I will be cautious and careful. I will be kind and loyal. I will be cursed, because the world is a cursed place, but I will have faith that this curse can be broken, if I journey long enough, far enough, if I earn it. For we are nothing without fear. We are nothing without love. We are nothing without hope and we are nothing without dreams to live for."

They hammer these facts into generations of minds, over centuries.

'The Snow Globe' (Historical Fiction, Sample)

The Christmas tree was an eyesore of trinkets by the time Kitty and her Father had finished piling on decorations. Its branches were buried in mountains of green and red, with its baubles, tinsel, candles and clumsily made honeycomb bells, which looked more like stomped on paper planes than anything else, hiding any view of the tree's leaves. Beneath the beautiful monstrosity the pair called a Christmas tree, lay a few presents allowed out for the adults on Christmas Eve, tied simply with brown paper and string. The sitting rooms, once bare windowsills were now littered with bits and bobs also, including hand-made cards delivered by her Mother's friends, varying in artistic talent, as Kitty squinted to make out lopsided robins.

Her Father, even on a festive day such as this, managed to still look like the businessman he was, with his coiffed chestnut hair and crisp black suit. He was seemingly successful in being untouched by the storm of tinsel too, which hid in the frilly folds of Kitty's pink and white dress, remaining entirely himself down to the scent of fresh cigar smoke that clung to the cuffs of his sleeves. Kitty's Father was a steady type of man, unchanging even with the fiercest of winds.

He lowered himself into his favourite armchair, groaning as he did, as if he were an older man rather than the younger one he was, and pulled Kitty into his lap. He fastened his grip around her small belly as she squirmed, twisting the fabric of her white woolen tights, in a useless effort to try to calm the energetic little girl.

"You must be the most fidgety child in the world, Kitty Cat!" He remarked, attempting to anchor her in place.

Kitty giggled as she finally settled herself, burrowing into her Father's suit jacket..

"I have a present for you ," He told her, his own expression mirroring the delight that twinkled in the hazel of her wide stretched eyes. "I will give it to you now if you don't tattle on me to your Mother."

Kitty grinned up at him, dimples carving themselves into her small and rosy cheeks.

"Mummy will know," She informed him. "She always knows."

She emphasised that last part in a ghostly sort of voice, as if every father and child should fear the uncanny all-knowingness of her Mother.

'Cat and Mouse' (Flash Fiction, Entire Piece)

Connor crawled across the unforgiving floor, the carpet scraping his knees raw and digging its felt fibres into his grazed skin. He should have been dramatically screaming at the sensation, wailing as if he were being shot with each drag of his body forward, like most little boys his age would. But he was too enraptured in chasing his toy truck, a large and brutish thing of solid blue plastic, to notice the tiny stinging cuts littering his legs. If only he had paused to examine them, bawled as he jammed a finger into one of his sticking scarlet scrapes, making his mother abandon the steaming pot of their dinner and rush into the room.

Perhaps then, somehow, she could've saved him.

The Monster twisted its shadow to hands, its essence forcing the vehicle into a sprint, wheels spinning in a carousel-like waltz.

Crash. Crash.

It threw the truck against the wall, a wolfish grin splitting its face into two halves of cracked porcelain. If only Connor had cried out, when he saw his favourite toy shattered.

If only Connor had wheezed, called for her, his,

"Mama-"

As the Monster wedged a glimmering sapphire shard into his once beating heart.

'The Chimeras in The Attic' (Fantasy, Sample)

The Chimeras had surely lived in Vesper House's attic long before Edith Wilder had found them. The two curious little ornaments of precisely etched wood, wings stretched like those of a bat or a miniature dragon, were littered in cobwebs, proving they must have retired from their days of soaring above the towering rooftops of Cyrdrel. Or at least, Edith liked to imagine there had been a time where the pair had flown across amber speckled skies.

Even as a human, growing up in the city, Edith had always heard the whispers of the creatures they called the Chimera. She knew of their pointed hound-like ears and crocodile-like fangs, of their sunken eyes and pinkish wrinkled skin. She had practically spent her entire life grasping at those long piercing claws of their spindly hands. The stories of the original settlers of Cyrdrel had hidden themselves away in the crannies of her elbows and the gaps between her teeth, their very essence inhaled through every clenching breath she'd ever took, until the Chimera had lived in the marrow of her bones.

Once upon a time, Cyrdrel had prayed to its beloved founders.

'Extraordinary' (Short Story, Entire Piece)

The Last Light is seen as an ordinary pub, an ordinary pub on an ordinary road. An entourage of trees surround the little house serving its patrons, their spindling branches crawling with the equally vicious ivy and scratching at the last dredges of the outer walls' white paint, which had once proudly coated the dilapidated bricks.

The local people traverse the familiar footpaths to reach their haven, winding their way through sodden farm fields and hopping over rotting wooden fences. Some of them go to sit by the roaring fireplaces in the early morning, sighing as sweet tea brushes at their lips and buttered toast melts into their tongues, breakfast a gift that sets to brightening their eyes. Others, find themselves sinking into the Last Light's ancient straightback chairs at a far later hour, their fingernails tapping at their pints with a resounding clink, as they lean their warmed cheeks against the cool of the pub windows, watching droplets of rain fall from the navy sky. In either case, come dawn or dusk, day or night, any time truly, the Last Light welcomes its visitors, its rust coloured front door swinging open for all kind, honest people that climb its steps, its hinges joyfully squeaking.

No one quite knows how Nellie manages to run the Last Light by herself, how exactly she keeps the pub in tow with only her hands tending to its inhabitants and labouring at its wares, but nobody ever really questions it. When, on one particularly brutal Winter's evening many years ago, old Nellie had stumbled her way across cobbled pavements and up steep roads, her muddied boots clomping across plenty of driveways, and invited people to make merry at her new pub, people only thought to be grateful for the respite she was providing.

They continue to think only of this now.

So perhaps that is why they do not notice the oddities themselves, why their gazes do not seek to follow the path of the restless furnishings flitting about the place of their own volition. Or why they do not marvel at how everything is always just right, their meals forever staying warm even when abandoned for hours, the pot of milk given for their coffee forever staying cold even when untouched. Or why it never seems strange that the pub is alive for every second of the year, how its taps continue to fill glasses and serve its customers even when its one worker isn't there, for she is fast asleep in her bed. Nobody questions anything, after all, why would they?

The Last Light is simply an ordinary pub, an ordinary pub on an ordinary road.

What else can it be?

'How The Banshee Forewarned' (Fantasy, Sample)

Theadora Crane was far from a concert pianist. When partaking in the art of playing her beloved piano, if one were to exclaim,

"I have never much fancied losing my hearing until this very moment!"

or something along those lines, as they were unwittingly made to listen to the torrent of her instrument's complaint screeching, then one would not be accused of anything close to impertinence for admitting as such. Nor when telling their families and friends the tales of her most torturous tunes, would anyone even bother questioning if the gossipier was possibly attempting to exaggerate the extent of Theadora's lacking musical abilities. There were no embellishments of the stories discussed amongst these groups, everyone in Grytt knew this to be true, no matter how much their ears wished it wasn't.

They had somewhat of an infamous reputation, the young Mrs Crane and her darling piano.

Theadora really was that bad. So bad in fact that her husband, who was coincidentally the one most often subjected to her feverish outbursts of 'song', had many wondrous dreams of lifting that damned piano's grand mahogany lid and cutting the cords of its many strings. But then, Thea would probably insist on being bought a new instrument to play. Victor feared his chances of survival were low if an accordion made its way into the home.

So, the piano stayed.

Thea much enjoyed the way Victor's twitching eyes would betray his pure and utter frustration when she took part in, what her mind had begun calling, her melodious ramblings. Increasingly, she found herself inclined to playing such fantastical pieces during the AMs, when maximum impact was most likely to be achieved. At such odd hours, she noted that Vic The Prick's irritation tended to cease to exist, instead being replaced with a fierce, boiling kind of anger. The tomato-ing of his face particularly amused her. With its discovery, she developed a strong desire to earn the dazzling gift of his annoyance at any cost.

This is why, on that first day when Victor Crane finally discovered there was more to his wife than what there seemed to be, Thea arose with the sun.