

A collection of Flash Fiction, written in 2024, as part of a Flash Fiction Workshop, run by Gail Anderson in the Oxford Continuing Education programme.

Dave Sinclair  
30 Dec 2024

Eutectic .....	2
Nothing like the present .....	3
The Dozen Flash Fiction Pieces I'll Probably Never Write .....	5
Summer, 1536 .....	6
Uile-bhèist.....	8

## Eutectic

<p>Peter wants to kiss Charlotte. Peter wants to move in with Charlotte.</p> <p>Peter holds Charlotte's hand when they go to the cinema. Peter asks Charlotte if she is lonely, hoping that she is.</p> <p>Peter throws breadcrumbs while Charlotte just watches. Peter asks Charlotte if he can cook her supper that night, hoping she will say yes.</p> <p>Peter kisses the soft dimple at the base of Charlotte's neck. Peter licks the fat flesh at the base of Charlotte's thumb, hoping she will like that.</p> <p>Peter meets Charlotte in the coffee shop later that week. Peter has de-caff Americano and buys Charlotte an espresso and a chocolate cake with walnuts</p> <p>Peter goes to the park and feeds the ducks with crumbs from the cake.</p>	<p>Charlotte needs a flatmate to help pay her rent. Charlotte does not like coming home to her empty flat.</p> <p>Charlotte says she does not know if she is lonely. Charlotte takes Peter to the park and they feed the ducks.</p> <p>Charlotte does not like fish, but Peter cooks her fishcakes. Charlotte wonders if the ducks would like fishcakes.</p> <p>Charlotte says it tickles when Peter nibbles her ear lobe. Charlotte says yes, yes, yes but she wishes she had not</p> <p>Charlotte tells Peter, she has got a promotion. Charlotte tells Peter she has bought a chinchilla.</p> <p>Charlotte walks home</p>
--	--

(220 words)

## Nothing like the present

William Jones sat at his desk, fingering his well-worn wallet of business cards for the last time.

*No more need for these*, he thought as attempted to throw the wallet into the waste bin on the other side of the room, but his considerable paunch disturbed his aim. The wallet flopped off the grey wall next to the bin and onto the carpet to join the cardboard and wrapping paper from the brand-new laptop the company had given him as a leaving present. He sighed – he could see no need for spreadsheets in his uncertain future. Nor for the bright red poinsettia that sat accusingly, withering on top of the filing cabinet. He had been both surprised and suspicious when his secretary had given it to him as a memento of their years together. They had never seen eye to eye, often bickering and arguing. He had always thought she had never forgiven him for replacing her original boss. He suspected she had always subtly been undermining his standing, feeding him the wrong company gossip and redirecting clients to others in the company.

Ignoring the mess on the floor he eventually locating a new but final, bottle of whiskey in the bottom of his desk. He took a long swig. *That hit's the spot*. The poinsettia seemed to be looking at him, accusing him in some way. *You get your own drink, buddy – we all have to look after ourselves in this God forsaken world*. The poinsettia seemed to nod, its leaves drooping a little farther. After he got halfway down the bottle, he felt optimistic enough to glance over the ads in the discarded newspaper wrappings. Maybe there would be something there that could fund his next bottle of whiskey. Amongst the long list of janitorial and burger flipping opportunities one item caught his attention:

### Get away with Murder

Want to make millions by becoming a best-selling author? Learn how to plot a murder most horrid and develop your writing to create maximum suspense. Free course for new talent – no previous experience needed, all course fees paid, plus a living bursary. To apply: submit 1000 words of your own writing depicting the opening scene of a murder story.

That sounded more fun than stacking shelves. He reached for the laptop. Perhaps it would be some use after all. After a moment's thought he started typing:

William Jones sat at his desk, fingering the well-worn wallet of business cards for the last time. *No more need for these*, he thought as he attempted to throw the wallet into the waste

bin on the other side of the room. Soon he would be a free man. But he had one more thing to do before he could go home. He picked up the red poinsettia that had been a retirement present from his secretary and positioned himself behind the office door. The poinsettia's terracotta planter had a satisfying heft to it. He raised it above his head and called out:

“Mrs Ponsonby, would you mind coming in here for one last dictation?”

(511 words)

## The Dozen Flash Fiction Pieces I'll Probably Never Write

What would Einstein make of Nanci Griffith's '*Speed of the sound of loneliness*'?

Twenty ways to leave your lover.

The twenty-first way to meet your lover.

I wonder if my spaniel thinks it is 'Raining Dogs and Cats'.

101 ways to make a potato crisp bounce.

What does the rainbow taste of, I wonder?

Science tells everyone, something they never knew - poetry does the opposite.

When I thought I was kissing you, you said you were flossing.

I asked for devotion, but did you disenfranchise me?

That thing I always forget on the shopping list, that's what led me to you.

Finally, you and I, together, happily ever after.

(111 words)

## Summer, 1536<sup>1</sup>

While grey clouds kiss and bruise the hills above the red bricks of Hunsdon House, a crow and a worm dance in a room inside. The worm, who is also a princess, would be a juicy meal for the crow. A morsel to be eaten soon, unless it will obey. For months, the sparrows have come and gone, chattering at this court, seeking to mend quarrels not of their making. Now, in the burgeoning warmth of summer, the worm clews to the bosom of her ladies.

The crow warns, “In all our lives, although each season has its turn, such motion must in death conclude. You must yield, madam, or else your life is done. It is only right and proper, that all of us must bow before our master. Otherwise, the final season runs, and that will be the end to all your work”.

The worm has tried to hide within the quiet turf, where buried secrets give her a burnished glow. For there it shares her place with bones of kings and gold or souls and other buried things. But now the passing of time has faded the turf’s green haze. The worm can only curl up, smaller, smaller, seeking mercy, imploring that her Maker protects his messenger through each and other shining night. So, then the worm eventually replies, “Thomas, should I truly cast aside, the holy love of my one lord? He surely knows that even if I give my word, he will know the secrets that I keep so buried deep. But between the two masters that I have here on earth, please tell me which one it is, to whom, that I should give my lie”.

The crow simply hunches deeper in his coat of black, and offers no advice, but gives her papers to unseeing, sign.

And so, although men take power from steel and sword, a queen must parlay only with her

---

<sup>1</sup> In the summer of 1536, the twenty seventh year of Henry VIII’s reign, shortly after the execution of Anne Boleyn, Mary signed a Letter of Submission that acknowledged Henry as the earthly representative of God: “I do recognize, accept, take, repute and knowledge the King's Highness to be supream head in earth under Christ of the Church of England, and do utterly refuse the Bishop of Rome's pretended authority, power and jurisdiction within this Realm.”( Stone, J. M. *The History of Mary I., Queen of England*, London: Sands & Co., 1901.126-127).

words. And all around, as trembling finches seek asylum with the cuckoos and magpies  
cease their mischief as murdering crows pass by.

(342 words, (plus 122 including footnote))

## **Uile-bhèist**

When I came to this place, both it and I were young. I swam in newborn rivers and roamed across forested floodplains and densely vegetated swamps and lakes. I met many creatures in the ancient seas and watched them slowly take their first step onto the sandy shorelines, and through the dunes into the verdancy of the tropical forests. Gradually they learned to colonise their world, to cross the arid deserts, to climb the fiery mountain ranges and even spread wings and soar the mountain ridges. I watched over them, like a patient parent.

While I waited for their minds to grow, I took their form. I was cautious, for many of them were violent. Time passed, and the creatures changed in many ways. They became more cunning, more violent, more agile, more ravenous and more malicious. They ate flesh, even if it was their own. Others simply become bigger, more ponderous, protected by their huge bulk, content to eat all green things. But for all of them, their minds remained dull, incurious and ordinary. I could not talk to them, for they had nothing to say. They were easy prey. I ate well, hunting in the seas and on the margins of the river. But although my appetite was met, I was unsatisfied. So, I made the cool darkness of the waters my home and watched and waited.

One day the asteroid came. The skies grew dark, and the creatures choked and died. Safe, hidden in the deep abysses of the oceans I slumbered for many years. When I awoke, new creatures ruled the land. I could feel their minds, busy with many thoughts. I sensed their intelligence, their determination to explore, to command, to understand the world. I sensed their promise. Surely there would be one amongst them, into whom I could place my purpose, who could sing my song for me. Yes, there it was – a female mind so crystal clear I could hear her thoughts half a planet away.

And thus, I travelled to the land she called A' Ghàidhealtachd, to the shore of Loch Nis, the



place of her home. And she sang for me a song, so pure, so shining bright, it could be heard across the stars - the song of a siren, beckoning, inviting, calling to those afar.

Much later, the silver ships will come. Then will be the time for breeding.

(400 words)