



Farnham Flash Fiction 24
Critique

The Swan

By Sally Ann Melia

Your Story

The Swan

"Mum!"

It was a two-meter-tall, candy-pink inflatable swan.
and it sat squashed and sad-looking in the high street window.

"He does not belong there," Hazel told me.

He's ten but he's wise, so I agreed.

We walked with purpose into the shop.

"Sixty-two pounds," the till girl told us.

"Oh dear, we can't afford that," I told Hazel.

"No, we can't afford that," Hazel told me.

The TV news was interrupted by adverts from a holiday company,
all tanned torsos, tiny bikinis and tall cocktails.

And there on the swimming pool

was our friend the two-meter-tall, cherry-glass-pink inflatable swan.

A group of youths shoved and fought as they tried to climb on top of him.

Our swan looked embarrassed and just a little scared.

"He does not belong there," Hazel told me.

I looked at the name of the holiday company and

its resorts in St. Tropez, Caprice and Martinique.

"Well, we can't afford that," I told Hazel.

"No, we can't afford that," Hazel told me.

It was a thin paper catalogue.

with pictures of red peppers for 39p and best British beef for £1.69

and there amidst the Thursday specials,

for one week only,

was our perfectly-polished, candy-floss-pink two-metre-tall, inflatable swan.

"We can afford that," I told Hazel.

"Let's go."

As the sun set,

we carried him across the mudflats.

that stretched out to the bay of birds and onto the sea.

We set him down in the shallow lapping waves,

and for one moment he hesitated, he looked back at us with delight and relief.

Until at last the wind caught him and he set sail.

"That's where he belongs," Hazel said.

And we waved goodbye to our two-metre-tall, baby-pink, inflatable swan.

"Yes, that's where he belongs," I agreed.

"All we had to do was set him free."

Your Critique

This short fiction has a unique charm and a heartwarming narrative that captivates the reader with its simplicity and depth.

Strengths

Emotional Resonance:

The story effectively evokes emotions, creating a strong connection between the readers and the characters, especially in their quest to find where the inflatable swan truly belongs. This emotional journey is the story's core, resonating well with themes of freedom and belonging.

Vivid Imagery:

The descriptions of the candy-pink inflatable swan, from being "squashed and sad-looking" in a shop window to "setting sail" into the sunset, are vivid and engaging. This strong imagery not only brings the story to life but also accentuates the narrative's whimsical and magical elements.

Character Relationship:

The relationship between Hazel and the narrator is depicted with warmth and depth. Their interactions, characterized by shared dialogue and mirrored sentiments, beautifully illustrate their bond and mutual understanding, adding a rich layer to the story.

Areas for Improvement

Tighten the Dialogue:

While the repeated dialogue between Hazel and the narrator underscores their relationship and the story's themes, it could be perceived as slightly redundant. Refining these exchanges to make them more varied or adding subtle nuances could enhance their impact without sacrificing the narrative's rhythm.

Expand on Character Development:

Although the story is short, providing a bit more background or insight into Hazel and the narrator's lives could deepen the reader's understanding of their motivations. Even a few sentences that hint at why the swan's freedom is so meaningful to them can add layers to their characters.

Clarify the Swan's Perspective:

The story anthropomorphizes the swan, attributing emotions and reactions to it. While this technique adds whimsy, ensuring

consistency and clarity in how the swan's perspectives are presented can strengthen the narrative's magical realism.

Conclusion:

Overall, this is a short inspired, emotionally evocative, fantasy, that needed a little bit more grit to be trully great.

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