



# *Not Your Average Fairy Tale*

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Retold Fairy Tales

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If you've come looking for once upon a time,  
Then stop not at this here tale of mine.  
If fairies and magic are what you seek,  
The chance you'll find them are very meek.  
For this is not one of princes and dragons,  
Nor witches or spells or taverns with flagons.  
It's a tale of hate and a tale of fear,  
It's a tale of blood and a tale of tears.  
So if these things do not tickle your fancy,  
Then run away now, this isn't a fantasy.  
As we near our start the rhymes must cease,  
For rhymes predict a much happier piece.  
So I give you now, without further adue,  
A fairy tale that may not be for you.

A house, a boy, a mother, a father. Nay, not a father persay, but a replacement one. How it must be to come home to find new badges of black and blue. How can a boy worry about things like grades and school when his sleep is replaced with screams and bangs through walls not even paper thin. Perhaps one day he grew tired of screams and bangs, of matching badges of fear like tattoos no one should share with one's mother? I would like

to say that when he stood up to this imposter of a father that he struck him down and got back his mother, but this was not a boy who played sports at school in this, his senior year. This wasn't a boy who picked fights and won. This was a boy who spent too much time nose deep in the pages of tales about the courage of others. And if borrowed courage were enough to save the day then the boy would be happily embracing his mother, not running through the night from a now even angrier man. If the man hadn't been a such a heavy drinker then perhaps he would have caught the boy. A curse before, now a blessing in the form of a hefty beer gut to slow the man down. So the boy ran. He ran and ran until he could run no further, and then he ran some more. He ran long after he could no longer hear stomping footsteps behind him. He ran long after he could no longer recognise the buildings and streets around him. He ran until he couldn't remember running anymore. It was at this time that he realized that he was awake. It was day. It was definitely day, and the boy was definitely not alone. He blinked away crusty tears and dirt until the figures peering down at him were no longer smudges on a lens. They were people, boys to be exact. There were seven of them in all, each just as dirty and disheveled as the last. They looked as if they'd never slept inside in their lives. He said they were boys but upon standing up they were no more than dwarves to him. They were children. Little orphaned children. They didn't speak to him. Was it out of fear or perhaps caution he didn't know. But they gave him some food and let him hide away under a little abandoned bridge they had claimed, so he was grateful. The boy was safe for now with his seven little dwarves, but what of the man? What is a man like that to do when a boy runs away into the night. Who would he talk to? What would he say? A mother would accept that a boy had ran away and was lost. But how to make sure the boy was lost for good, and how to make sure he would say nothing? You don't become a man like that without making a few friends that are just as nasty, so he called one up. The shoelace strangler they called him. Fitting name for a man with the same hobby as his name suggests. He searched and searched for the boy, lace at the ready, an end wound around each hand. The frayed lace craved the neck of the boy but it would not be satisfied, for the the dwarves were careful and they were quiet. No one yet knew that dirt stained dwarves were harboring the boy, and the boy was smart enough to stay where he was. But a boy can't hide forever. Curiosity ate at his heart and the boy snuck back home one night to see what had become of his beloved mother. A strange car was parked where his stepfather's should be. The boy payed no mind as he approached the door, but perhaps he should have. The boy didn't hear the owner of the car sneak up behind him. He didn't even realize the man was there until he was whipped around to face him, the man holding the boy against the door. The man pulled from his the depths of his hair a pick, each prong as sharp as a toothpick, and held it to

the boy's throat. The boy could see the smile on the man's face. The man said the boy's stepfather knew he would come back. The stepfather was right, for the boy's heart had betrayed him and brought him to this fate. The boy could hear the beating of his heart grow faster and louder. The boy closed his eyes and listened to the beats, but one was out of place. It was louder and sharper. The beat was the loud crack of wood on skull as the man toppled to the ground to reveal the boy's mother, bat in hand. She yelled at him to run but his feet would not move. She yelled again as headlights appeared around the corner. His stepfather's car approached and the boy ran. The boy felt so ashamed for running but what could the boy do? The dwarves watched as the boy cried under the bridge. They knew not what to do, and neither did the boy. The sun rose on a Sunday, and the dwarves drug the boy to the church where they hoped that the food the church offered to those in need would cheer him up. Those at the church were very friendly and generous and fed the dwarves well. One of the old ladies saw that the boy looked under the weather and offered him a warm hug and miniature pie. She seemed so familiar and welcoming. Despite all that had happened the boy was grateful. The boy left with the dwarves back to the bridge as the scent of apple and cinnamon filled the boy's nostrils. The boy wolfed down the pie and his full belly relaxed him and he felt sleepy. As he drifted off to sleep the boy remembered why the old lady had seemed so familiar. She was the mother of that imposter of a father the boy feared. The smiles of the old lady were not smiles of welcome and care but were grins of victory. The boy didn't get to finish his thought before drifting off into a deep sleep, even while still standing. The dwarves almost didn't notice the boy tumble over the railing head first toward the concrete under the bridge where they slept. The dwarves loaded the boy up into a grocery cart and wheeled him to the hospital. They stitched up the boy's skull and placed him in a room with glass for walls for constant observation. The doctors knew not when the boy would wake up and tasked an intern to sit with him and watch. The intern came in every day after school at the same time. She remembered the boy from high school. He was maybe a year or two behind her. She pitied the poor boy, for one day when she was finally able to place his name. She remembered that that same last name had matched one she had seen on the news days before. The tragic story of a woman who had been killed outside her home. Of a husband whose prints were found all over a stained wooden bat, but whose car was gone and he, like it, was nowhere to be found. She watched over the boy, and read to him, though she knew he likely couldn't hear her. She read tales of courage, and tales with happy endings. She was even reading one of his favorites when the boy blinked his eyes open. And when she saw his eyes looking up at her, she was almost able to answer his question of why she was crying. But she could not, for she knew that the tale the boy would soon be told would not be one with a

happy ending. The girl had done all that she could. Days before, the girl had already convinced her mother to allow the boy to stay with them when he awoke, but there's only so much a girl can do for a boy with no happy ending. Maybe the boy would draw strength from what he'd been through and make something wonderful of himself. Maybe the boy and the girl would grow to love each other and live happily ever after. Maybe they would have children of their own to tell tales to. Maybe the dwarves would find somewhere or someone to take them in. Maybe they would all find homes and families who loved them. Maybe the worst was behind these characters. But like I warned you, this isn't that kind of tale.

This is a tale of something real,  
A tale of those who fight and steal.  
A tale of pain and of loss,  
A tale of choices with unforgettable costs.  
A tale of things that happen every day,  
A tale that has quite a bit to say.  
So if this tale was not really in your key,  
Then you haven't quite faced reality.  
So cheers to happily ever after,  
A break from life's very real disasters.

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