



Battery Pack

Fruits De Mer

Henry Northmore

The ocean liner pulled up alongside the drifting lifeboat, and the first mate scuttled down the ladder to hook the small vessel and secure it to the ship. He pulled back the tarp, gagging at the stench - then noticed movement at the back of the boat. Unbelievable: a woman and child amongst the bones. "Look mummy," croaked the toddler, rushing forward, "more food."

@HENRYNORTHMORE

Birthday Present

Tamasine Reilly

Shiny, blue, the birthday present sits on the table. Squealing, the child rushes forward. "Be careful Sebastian," warns his mother, barely containing her laughter. With little restraint he tears through wrapping paper, flakes of cobalt littering the floor. Inside, a kitten is mewling. Sebastian's smile shrinks. For a four-year-old he has an exceptional aim. The kitten slithers down the window leaving a yellowish smear. "I wanted a puppy," says the boy.

TAMS.REILLY@GMAIL.COM

The white-haired gentleman held the vial in trembling fingers. Mesmerised, he rocked the liquid, commanding his own miniature sea. "My granddaughter was born after the drought began," he said. "And you say this was collected on the last day it rained?" Eric nodded, his smile subdued. "She's only known synthetic water. I have cash - name your price." Eric was already texting home: Let's celebrate tonight, Eric. How about fried onions? Lots and lots of onions.

Tears Of Eve

Tracy Felts

Mop Boyfriend

Jenny Mackenzie

Lucy got car-jacked. Terrifying. They jumped in wearing hoodies. Later, she read about "passenger dummies", and dragged a shop mannequin from her wardrobe, unscrewed a mop and plonked it on his head. Very Roger Daltry. "Quick spin, babes?" she smiled. She grappled him downstairs and into her new car. That night she put him in her bed. Was that weird? "Night, sweetheart," she said. "Night, honey," he whispered.

EARLYBIRDBINNEWS.COM/SHORT-STORIES

Pickaxe

David Hartley

I pause for breath outside my own nostril. Last night I dreamt you died and the dream clings to my brain like a limpet: my wet cheeks, the embarrassment of my grief. I can't concentrate, I need it gone. So I heave the pickaxe from my shoulder and ready the rope. I'm heading in.

DAVIDHARTLEYWRITER.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK

Missing

Sarah Butler

He left a note: gone to buy cigarettes. And I believed him. Why wouldn't I? He'd been smoking thirty years. We'd had our first together, on the field behind school. He puked. I didn't. I gave up ten years back. He stuck with it. He probably still is - smoking, I mean. He probably still is - alive, I mean. When I picture him, he's both, the smoke curling up so I can't quite see his face.



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