

Procrastination.

Not two minutes to midnight but twenty. My Domesday countdown clock deafens. Is there any way that will I complete this flash fiction before the deadline? Time stands still; I must get my arse into gear. I should write what I know, but at this very moment, my time space continuum is all a-cock. Nothing flows.

Who's fault? Mine of course. Left it to the last minute as usual. Things, just got in the way. My thoughts are currently as vacuous as Liz Truss's forty-nine-day government. Maybe she'll write a cease-and-desist letter to me that I can piggy-back as a plot. Sadly, that doesn't fit the brief – I can't crowbar incompetence into the theme 'twenty', but hey-ho, inspiration will come soon. Won't it?

Rules for flash fiction: don't ramble, no digression, keep it tight, cut all extraneous descriptions and convey meaning through elucidation with no declarations. This tale should be a captivating narrative, with a poetic twist. No flash in the pan, it needs gravitas. I need to distil the storyline into a loaded conversation, represent the subject within my manuscript as a delicate wave that will crash on the beach with its twisted last syllable.

Who said a picture paints a thousand words? Well at present I can't paint for toffee, I'm a neanderthal with crayons. I've got a Monet print hung on the wall... Westminster in the smog... Hey! I scold myself. Back in the game, you're too easily distracted. 'Twenty' must provide the impetus, but a numerical tale with the emotional impact of a kick to the balls; I am struggling to see how that works.

'Twenty,' a rational number, an integer divisible by... I cough. How can that inspire? I need to pen a crazy devastating tale with an innovative juxtaposition at the end. One that will leave the reader breathless with admiration and desperate for an encore. That is clearly not happening today.

How to spark an idea? Any idea? What's the twentieth wedding anniversary gift? Ahh China; dancing cups and saucers perhaps? A Tang dynasty vase? Murder at the vicar's tea-party? I once massacred the Wedgewood service from our wedding list, when I smashed two bowls and a saucer. Twenty years of bad luck? Before you chastise my knowledge and wisdom, I know; the broken China is my own clumsiness. It's shattered mirrors and walking under ladders that pre-empts ill fortune and then, that's seven years; not twenty.

I just need a suitable working idea to nail to my masthead. Can I sail this gravy boat? Hang a subtle scenario from the yardarm, trawl a surprising correlation that delivers a literary wet fish slap around the chops. I need the lexicon fairy to wave her magical wand over my laptop and deliver a wonderland of words into my inbox. I submit, 'twenty' is indivisible by my paltry seven words.

I regroup, circle my characters and waggon and try not to mince my words, mainly cos I haven't written many. I'm on a mission now, to concoct a crisp stir-fry and not

stew up a pottage. In truth, I'm still pitching double denim, over accessorising and mixing my prints if not my metaphors. This piece is more Croc than Louboutin

I need to experiment. If I work myself into a fit of rage, that could help. Five to eight hundred angry last-minute words. Fury, however, laughs in my face, so howsabout a flame of romance. Sex this up. Enough cleavage to titillate but no full frontal cliché. Elegance is all. Maybe I dive straight to the passionate shagging, skip the foreplay. Yuk, even the thought of that deepens my depression.

Lightbulb moment, I should use my apprehension and neurodiversity to rock my inner anxiety and compose the chronicle of our time. But how? All I do is daydream, procrastinate and squirm with creative burn out. Why won't my story flow? The clock ticks, the deadline approaches. I'm sinking like a Moon under Water

Hey that gives me an idea. A cheeky G&T should let the creative juices flow. Hemmingway wrote whilst he was sozzled and he's one of the world's top twenty wordsmiths, it said so in Sunday's literary colour magazine - so must be true.

What was that gut-rot we used to drink after youth club? Yes: Mad Dog twenty-twenty; kiwi and lemon flavour. Bet that would jump start inspiration: alcohol turbo-charged with fluorescent E-numbers. A blast from the past. What's in the drink's cabinet? Is it gin o'clock yet? I glance at my watch.

Damn!

Deadline missed; competition closed.

That's twenty minutes of my life squandered, time I'm never going to get back. Oh well, it is now five o'clock Friday night. The weekend starts here.

Flash fiction dead and buried; long live the kitchen disco.

Glitterball on.

Clink, clink; fizz.

Cheers.