

Reflex Fiction

Quarterly international flash fiction competition.



When to Let Go

BY KATHRYN ALDRIDGE-MORRIS - 12 JULY 2022

My ex leaves a voicemail on day three of my holiday to tell me he's chopped off his finger; how the severed tip slid from the kitchen top into his Converse boot and, oh yeah, welcome to his shit new life.

The hotel bartender pumps cream onto my Piña Colada, asks if I'm waiting for someone. No, I say, *I like* being alone.

Sure you do, he says. Can I get you anything else for your breakfast?

The phone pings. Another voicemail. The paramedics have said to put the finger on ice till they come. There's only one ice-cube left in the tray. Was it such a big ask to top up the tray when I took ice-cubes? Have I ever tried balancing a severed finger on top of one fucking ice-cube?

I shake the crushed ice in my glass.

He's been googling, he tells me in voicemail three. If the tip isn't sewn back on within a certain time, the finger will

continue to grow. He could end up trailing a ten-foot finger behind him for the rest of his shitty life.

I call him back. Micky, I say, I'm in Ibiza. You have a girlfriend.

I don't want to hassle her with this kind of stuff, he says.

I'm in fucking Ibiza, I say, Moving on.

He hangs up.

The phone stops pinging once I get to the beach. I figure there's no signal. I throw my towel onto the sand and lie on my front. The coast seems to be thronging with couples oiling each other's backs, licking each other's ice-creams, passing cigarettes from bags. I wish there was someone I could tell how good it was to be single and free and spending my days however the hell I pleased.

When I get back to my room, there are no missed calls. Why hasn't he rung? I picture him prostrate, bloodied, his finger dangling like a vine through the window, reaching out for help. I call him.

I'm good, he says. Sonia came over and she brought ice.

So, the finger's saved? I ask. Won't keep growing?

Nah, he says. And tells me it's already healing.

This story was longlisted in the Summer 2022 Reflex flash fiction competition.

Flash Fiction by Kathryn Aldridge-Morris

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One Comment



Jupiter

Nice! Great characterisation in there.

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