



Vol. 2, No. 1, January 3, 2020



Welcome 2020! Being lovers of historical fiction, it's been fun seeing all the posts about returning to the 20s. Even our own local library is having an event celebrating the stories and history of our town with a 20s theme – 1920s that is, not 2020s. 2020s just doesn't have the same ring to it, does it?

To celebrate the New Year, Pages of the Past is kicking it off with a Flash Fiction contest. Writers were invited to submit a short story to the prompt of one of three pictures. Three stories follow for you to read and vote on. The story with the most votes wins a \$50 gift card to help recover from a festive holiday season.

If you didn't catch the contest in time for this one (or were too crazy busy, as many of our readers were) there's another one coming up. We'll have one each quarter. Details on the next contest will be in the January 17th issue.

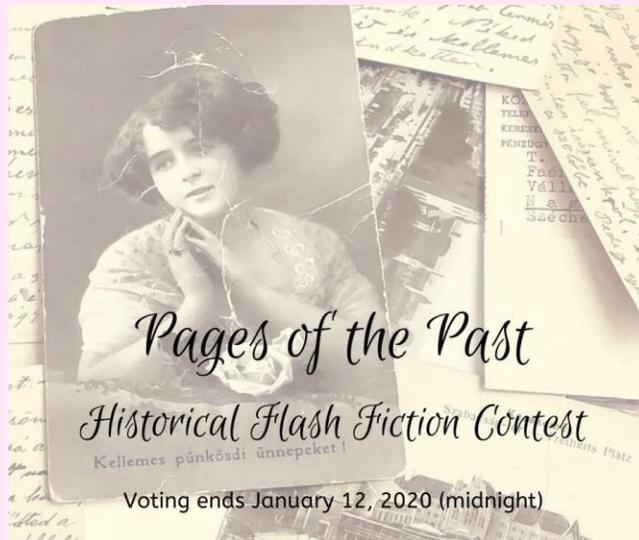
But for now, go enjoy a trip to the past – three worlds where the photos took three of our authors. Then vote on your favorite. Send your vote to: trishasnewsletter@yahoo.com

Trisha

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Following are the stories submitted to the Pages of the Past Historical Flash Fiction contest.

Read the stories and vote on your favorite. One vote allowed per person. Voting ends January 12, 2020 at midnight. The winner will be announced in the January 17th Pages of the Past newsletter.

Send your vote to: trishasnewsletter@yahoo.com

The stories were written to one of these three picture prompts:



Story #1 – Sisters by Lindsay Downs

Story #2 – Changing Horizons by Anne Clare

Story #3 – Insolent by Katie Brandt

Story #1
Sisters
by Lindsay Downs

13 May 1918

With their father off fighting the Germans and their mother having died several years ago from TB all they had was each other.

They were glad their uncle had gotten them jobs at the railyard which paid a barely living wage but, they were happy since they were helping the war effort. At least what little they brought home helped to keep the wolves at bay and food on the table.

More often than not they did what sister do. Fought with each other and defended each other against anyone who tried to hurt one of them. And that's what happened to the youngest.

Lizzie tended to be shy, always drifting behind her sisters, when a stranger, especially men who heavily populated the railyard, came near them.

Yesterday, by accident, she'd gotten separated from them and was making her way back to where they hid their lunch pails when she'd been set upon by the drifter, Timmy. No one liked him. All he did was complain about one thing or another. When finished with her he'd left her with torn clothes and in tears. That's how Lizzie's sisters, Peggy and Maggie, found her.

Slowly, painfully they learned what had happened. "I'm scared he might try again," Lizzie whispered between bouts of crying.

"Do you know where he went?" Peggy, the oldest, asked in a comforting tone while cradling her.

"I think over by the roundhouse. I've seen him there a couple of times hiding from work."

"Do you think that's where he keeps his stuff?" Maggie said.

"Yeah. Why?" Lizzie replied.

"From what you said I'll bet he's attacked other girls before. He needs to be punished but the cops, I'd wager, won't do anything. We have to be justice. Timmy needs to disappear, once and for all."

"How can we do that?" Peggy inquired.

"With these," Maggie replied, holding up her drilling hammer.

Lizzie wrapped her arms around her legs then started rocking back and forth. She did this when chewing over a dilemma, such as now. She stopped and looked at her sisters. A wicked grin on her lips.

"I get the first swing," she insisted, reaching for her hammer.

"Of course," her sisters replied in unison.

Lizzie suggested they wait until after work, which they did then hunted down the scum. They found him right where she said he'd be.

"Come back for more, and you even brought your sisters," Timmy cackled.

"Yeah," she replied, then waited while he stood and started unfastening his trousers.

Before he could do anything to stop her she stepped up, swung her drilling hammer right between his legs dropping him to his knees. Immediately, Peggy's weapon connected with his nose while Maggie's came down on the top of his head.

"Let's stuff him in there," Lizzie, now vindicated, said, pointing to one of several freight cars destined for France.

The next morning, having put yesterday's event behind them, they sat on a cowcatcher waiting for their assignments. As the train pulling the box car carrying Timmy rolled past Lizzie looked to make sure the door was still secured. She felt the blood rush from her face when she saw the lock was broken off.

The End

To read more from Lindsay Downs, you can find him here.

Story #2
Changing Horizons
by Anne Clare

Milly's face ached, the smile plastered across it wearing thin. *This has got to be the last photo, hasn't it?*

"Just one more, girls! You," the newspaper photographer pointed to Lorna, who was whispering to Nanette, "could we get a smile on this one? Please? Remember, you're the happy, hardworking women of the Homefront!"

Milly suppressed a sigh. *C'mon Lor, just play along so we can get back to work.*

Lorna rolled her eyes. "Okay, okay." She flashed him a wide grin. "Better?"

Snap. "Perfect!" he said, then muttered, "Finally."

Flexing her stiff jaw, Milly asked, "We're done, then?"

Without waiting for an answer, Nanette slid down from her perch above the locomotive's "cow catcher," allowing the hammer she'd posed with to settle into the dust. Lorna hopped down too, continuing her stream of talk. "When Steve gets home, we figure we'll get married right away, especially if he can get back his job at the foundry..."

The photographer didn't notice Milly's question, or Lorna's interruption. He pulled out a silk handkerchief to wipe down his nice Graflex camera, grimacing at the dust and dirt of the train yard.

Milly climbed down from her perch and sidled past Nanette and Lorna, who was outlining her future life in rapid detail. It seemed like the whole town had couldn't stop talking about the future since this morning's headline: "Allies Liberate First German City."

Aachen had been taken just yesterday. American forces were in control of a city on German soil. Finally, after all these years, it seemed like the end of the war might be in sight.

And soon, Milly thought, everything will change.

Pursing her lips, she took a deep breath and willed the tears away. *Better get back to work. It doesn't bear worrying about.* But first, she wanted to make sure this task was done. Stepping closer to the photographer, she asked again, "Excuse me—are we done?"

He glanced up at her, wrapping his camera flash as carefully as a new mother swaddling her baby, and blinked. "What? Oh, sure. Yep. All done."

Nodding, she turned to go, but he continued talking. "Bet you girls are looking forward to getting out of all this." His nod took in the whole train yard—the smells of oil and coal dust, the haze of steam, the echoing cacophony of metal on metal and voices of workers hollering to and at each other. "Back to normal life. Back home."

Milly opened her mouth, then closed it. He watched her, waiting for an answer as she wracked her brain for an honest, acceptable response.

Mercifully, Lorna stepped in. "You bet we are!" She snapped her gum loudly as she grinned. "I mean, it hasn't been so bad. But once the boys all come home, I'll sure be glad to leave these aching muscles and this dusty hair behind!"

Nanette laughed and agreed, and Milly took the chance to slip into the background, to gather up the hammers and search out something to keep her hands busy.

Gravel crunched underfoot as she tried to outdistance thought. *Of course, I'm glad the war's looking to be over soon...but...*

Things would be different if Matt hadn't...if it hadn't been for that sniper in Sicily.

One of the fellas working up in the locomotive called to her. She waved and glued on a smile. After Matt, this job had given her purpose. She'd made friends here.

Glancing back at Lorna and Nan laughing, rejoicing over the bright future they could see ahead, she bit her lips and faced forward, squinting into a hazy, smoke-obscured horizon.

The End

To read more from Anne Clare, you can find her here.

Story #3
Insolent
by Katie Brandt

Dear Margaret,

Insolent. Stamped five times in the guard's ledger. Those three syllables don't define me. Then again, maybe they do. Father always called it spunk, God rest his soul. If he and Mum hadn't been killed in the fire, I'd still be known as his spunky and incorrigible first-born daughter, not a petty thief sent to Van Diemen's Land.

I'm thankful for my insolence though, because my non-insolent shipmates are now at the bottom of the ocean, not having the strength to survive this journey. As for me, the five days alone with bread and water that my insolence earned me weren't that bad. I've gone longer with less food. The thing that hurts most about this last year is that I won't ever see you again or my nieces and nephews. You're the only family I have left, and we, too, have been forced apart. You were disappointed with my choice, I know, but I could not bear to lie in bed one night longer, listening to the hollow rumbling in the little ones' stomachs. They had long since stopped complaining of hunger, using what energy they had to huddle together to keep warm. It broke my heart, as I know it broke yours, and when opportunity presented itself, I took it. I never thought Mr. Van Golten was quick enough in mind or body to notice the missing ham or to catch me. Never did I imagine that I would be on one of the convict transport ships watching my homeland disappear on the horizon.

Did you ever see these dark days coming, sister? It's funny the paths our lives take sometimes. I always thought you and Tom and the children would remain in the grand house until your hair turned silver and wrinkles mapped your face. For him to succumb to illness so quickly, just days after you lost the baby, was unimaginable. I pray that someday you will be able to smile again. I pray that you and the children can survive in that drafty flat *until* your smile returns.

Have you seen Howard lately? He's sweet on you, you know. You've said you can't marry when your heart still mourns the loss of Tom, but think about the children. Howard could provide the security you lack, so consider his affections, please.

As for me, I've made some friends on the journey to Van Diemen's Land. Other gals who are as spirited as me; others who are also a burr in the backside of these guards. They call me Inny, and I've nicknamed them Soul and Letty. We are the insolent three.

Soul, Letty, and I stick together and watch out for each other. No one wanted to hire us when we arrived in this land down under, so now we labor in the train yard. I can hear your gasp from here, Margaret, but it's not bad work. I have a place to sleep, food to eat, and trousers to wear. It's quite freeing, frankly. Someday, when you regain your place in society and are drinking tea in your parlor, your petticoats and corset suffocating you, think of me in my loose trousers, living a life of adventure. These trains we clean, they're stuck on one track, the same route, the same scenery on every trip. That was my life in England.

Now, so much more opportunity lies before me. Rest assured that I will survive here, and I will rejoice in my circumstances. All because I am plucky, resilient, and yes, sometimes even insolent.

All my love,

Ingrid

The End

Vote for your favorite store. One vote allowed per person.

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I hope you enjoyed the stories submitted for the flash fiction contest. Pages of the Past is a weekly newsletter celebrating historical fiction. Each week has an article about writing historical fiction, an author interview or other special segment, and a featured book or two from different historical periods.

Sign up here to receive your own newsletter each Friday. It's free! You'll only get the newsletter. We never share the email addresses with anyone else and won't bombard your inbox with a slew of other offers. You can also join us in our Facebook group.

Happy reading!

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Stay tuned ... another Historical Fiction Flash Contest is scheduled for April 3rd, written to three different photo prompts. Deadline to submit stories – March 20th. New photos and details will be in the January 17th newsletter.