

The Accident

by
Terry Bell

Part 1: A Foggy Night

'Be careful, Tony! You're driving too fast. If you don't slow down we'll have an accident.' Tony could hear the fear in his wife's voice, and, although he would never admit it, he knew that he was driving too fast for these conditions.

'Don't worry,' he replied. 'There's no one else on the roads on a night like this.' But he slowed down to fifty anyway, just to be safe.

The night was dark and there were no lights on the road. To make things worse, a thick fog was falling, making conditions even more difficult. Tony could see no more than twenty metres ahead, and the shadows from the tall trees on the side of the road didn't help, either.



'I don't like this road,' said Susan. 'It's dark and scary! And just look at the fog coming down now. You can't see a thing!'

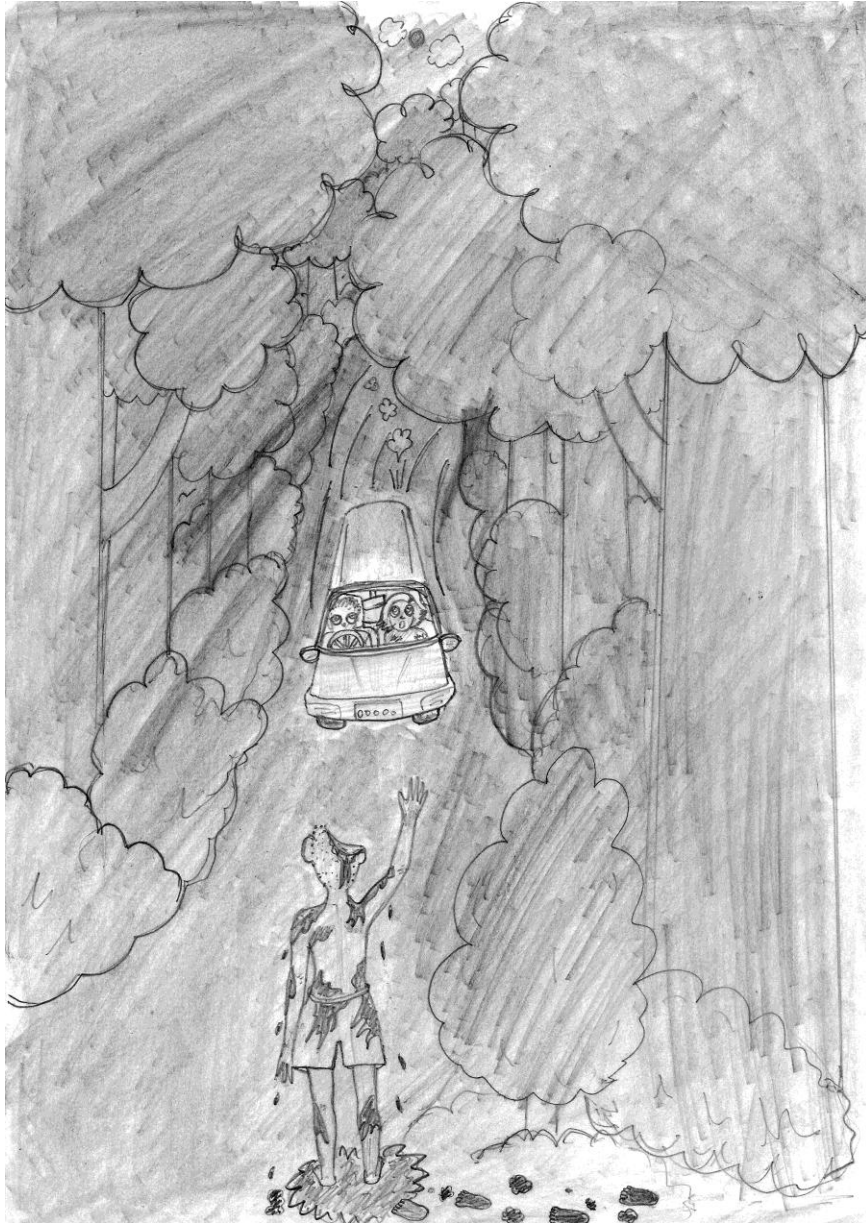
Even fifty kilometres an hour was too fast for these conditions but Tony wanted to get home as soon as he could. He didn't want to miss the Liverpool-Everton game. Only half an hour before it started and still another twenty-five kilometres to go.

Just then, they saw something just in front of them. It was a shadow more than anything. Just a shape. As they got closer, they could see the figure of a young boy, standing in the middle of the road.

'Be careful!' screamed Susan. 'There's someone out there!'

Tony braked hard and swerved to the right but he was sure he had hit the young boy. The car came to a stop after another twenty metres.

'I told you we were going too fast!' yelled Susan. 'Why don't you ever listen?'



She jumped out of the car and ran back to where the young boy had been standing.

Tony was still in shock as he, too, climbed out from the driver's seat to see the damage. In his mind, he was sure he'd hit the young boy.

'If only I'd been driving more slowly,' he thought. 'Now I'm sure to miss the Liverpool game!'

Part 2: The Young Boy

Susan reached the spot first. She looked around but couldn't see anything. 'Where is he?' she thought. 'He was standing right here.' Just then, Tony arrived. 'Can you see anything?' he asked.

'Nothing,' she replied. 'Nothing at all!'

Just then a shadow appeared from the side of the road. It was a small boy, no older than eight or nine years of age. He was very pale and had a bad cut on the side of his head. Blood was coming out of the wound but he seemed OK.

Tony and Susan were both shocked at what they saw. There was no way he would get to see even the second half now, thought Tony.

'Can we help you? What's happened?' they asked together. 'Can we take you to the hospital?'

The young boy raised his head slowly and looked at Tony and Susan. His eyes were cold and staring. Susan shivered and Tony felt uncomfortable. After a while, the boy spoke, 'I'm fine,' he said. 'But my mother needs help.'

'What!' said Tony. 'I didn't see your mother. Where is she?'

'She's down the road, about two kilometres,' said the boy. 'You have to go help her. Go now!'



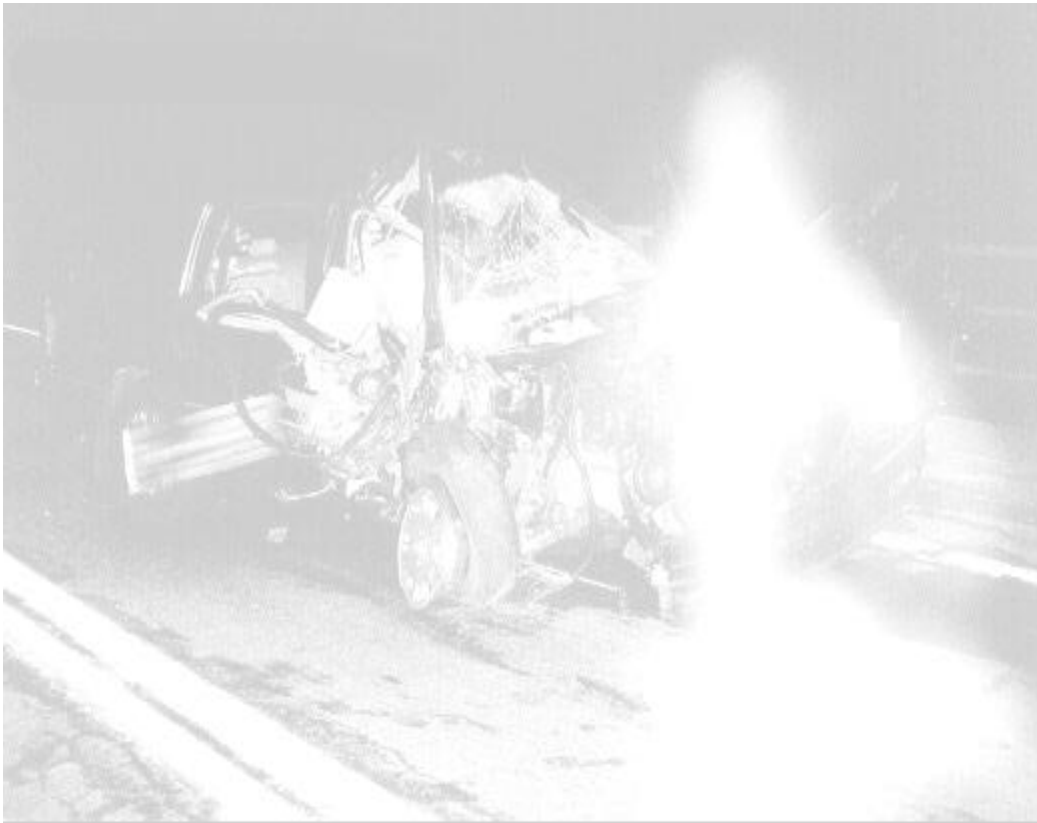
The way the boy spoke and his cold, staring eyes were very scary.

'C'mon. ' Tony said to Susan. 'Let's get out of here. Let's go look for his mother.'

So they climbed back inside the car, both feeling a little bit afraid after their conversation with the strange boy. Neither of them really knew what to expect. Neither of them was prepared for what they would find two kilometres down the road!

Part 3: The Ghost

As they got back inside their car, Tony turned round and drove in the direction they had just come from. Neither of them spoke, but they had a lot of questions they wanted to ask. They drove in silence along the road, more slowly this time. Then suddenly, after a couple of kilometres, they saw something in front. It looked like a car had hit a tree and had overturned. There were two people lying in the road.



Tony stopped the car. Both he and Susan jumped out and ran to the people lying on the road. Susan ran to what seemed to be a woman lying on one side of the road. She was crying in pain but still alive.

'Tony!' she cried, 'this one's still alive. But she's very badly injured. We must get her to a hospital.'

But there was no reply from Tony.

'Tony! What are you doing? Didn't you hear me? There's a badly injured woman over here!'

Slowly Tony stood up from where he'd been kneeling and went over to Susan. His face was white and his hair was standing on end.

'What's the matter with you!' she asked. She had never seen him look so frightened.

'You look as though you've just seen a ghost!'

'I think I have!' he answered slowly, and he stared coldly in front. 'Go look at the person on the other side of the road. He's dead. And it looks like he's been dead for some time.'

So Susan walked over to the other side of the road. The fog was very thick now, making it difficult to find the other figure. When she saw him, she felt a cold shiver down her back.

She reached the figure and, from the size of the body, realised it must be a child, a young boy, lying face down in the road.

'Poor young thing!' she thought. She knelt down to take a closer look.

'Maybe he's not dead yet,' she thought and she turned the young boy over.

When Susan saw the face, she let out a loud scream, dropped the body and almost fell over backwards. She was still screaming when Tony reached her.

The headlight of Tony's car was now lighting up the boy's face. It was badly cut and there was dried blood everywhere. In spite of all the blood, they both knew that they had seen this boy before, about three minutes earlier, about two kilometres down the road!



Part 4: Confessions

When the police arrived half an hour later, they found Tony and Susan trying to help the woman and keep her warm until an ambulance arrived. The dead boy lay on the other side of the road.

When the woman had been taken to the hospital, the police asked Tony and Susan a lot of questions. They wanted to know if they had been involved in the accident. When Tony said they hadn't, the police asked him how he knew about the accident. Tony looked at Susan and told the police everything that had happened since they saw the young boy in the road a few kilometres down the road.



The police didn't believe the story about the boy – a dead boy - telling him and Susan about the injured mother. So they asked a lot more questions and checked Tony to see if he had been drinking. After three hours of questioning, the police knew they could not keep them any longer so they let them go home. They would need to ask them some more questions later, the police said.

The drive home was quiet. Neither Susan nor Tony said a word.

When they reached home, Tony parked the car in the garage and Susan went into the kitchen and made a cup of strong tea. Tony arrived just as she was pouring the tea.

'Yes, please,' he said.

They sat in silence for a while. Tony could see the worried look on his wife's face. He also felt a strange fear, something he hadn't felt for some time now. In the end he broke the silence.

'That's not the first time you've seen that boy, is it?' he asked.

Susan looked at him in shock.

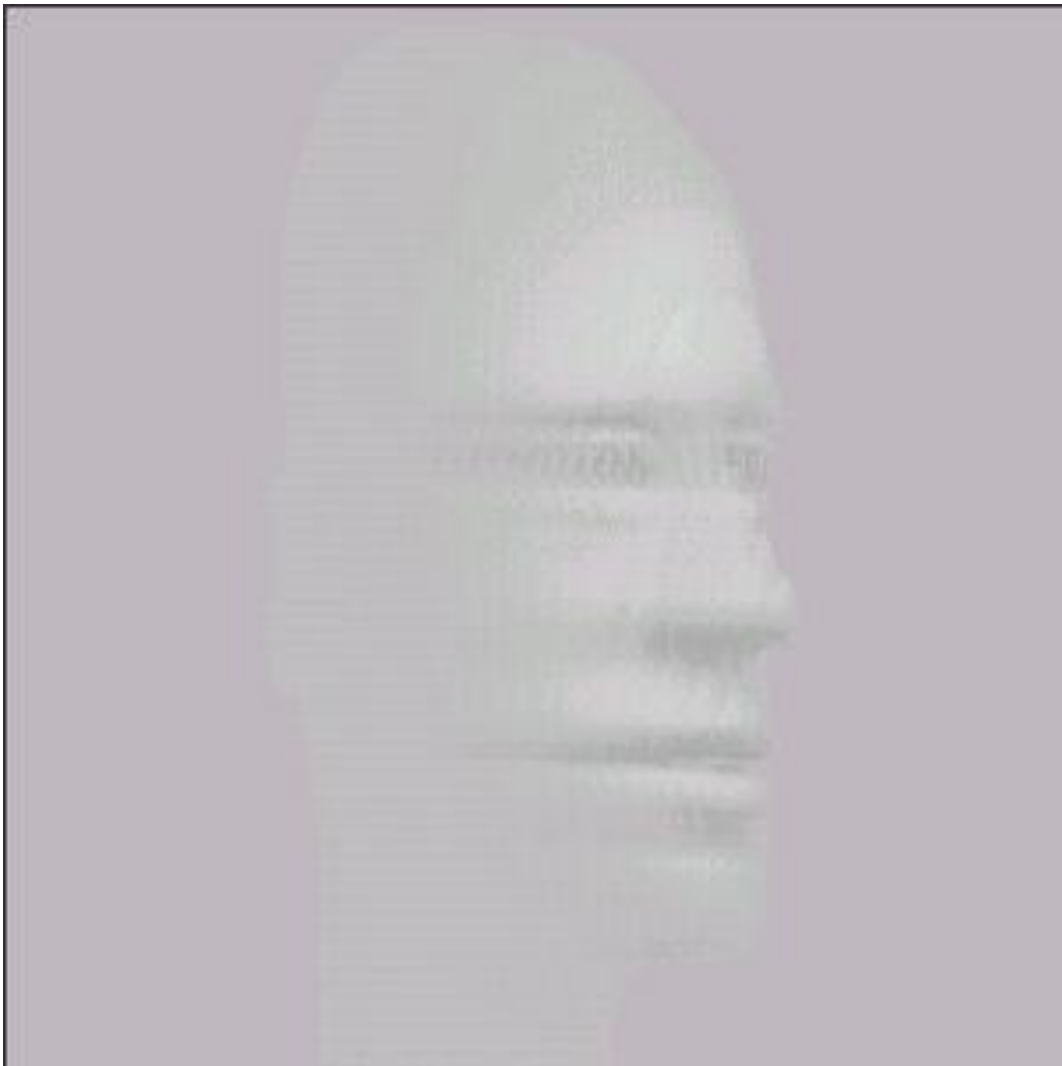
'Wh..what do you mean?' she gasped. 'What are you talking about?'

'I mean tonight was not the first time you saw him, was it? I could see that in your face.'

Susan couldn't believe what she was hearing.

'How do you know that?' she asked in amazement.

'Because I've also seen him before,' replied Tony. 'And more than once!'



Part 5: Tony's Story

'Sit down,' Tony told his wife. 'I'll tell you all about it.'

And for the next hour, Tony described how he had seen the young boy twice before. Tony began his story.

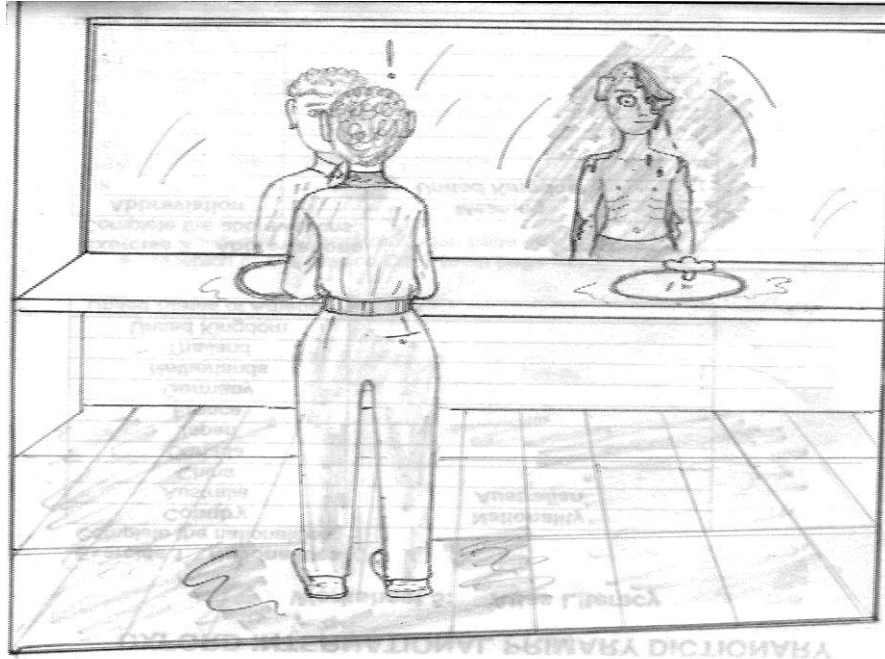
'The first time I saw him I was in the city. I had an important meeting with my boss and I was a little late for the meeting so I was in a hurry. I was waiting to cross a road and there was a lot of traffic on the road. I decided I'd try to run across and beat the traffic. As I started to run, I slipped and started to fall onto the road. There was a huge truck coming along the road. I was going to fall in front of the truck. I knew I would be killed if the truck hit me but there was nothing I could do to help myself.

Suddenly, I felt someone take hold of my coat from behind and pull me back onto the pavement. Someone had saved my life! I looked behind me to see who it was. It was then that I saw his face, a face I will never forget. It was the face of a young boy, very pale, with staring eyes. On one side of his face there was a deep cut with blood streaming from it. He looked scary. What was even more scary was when he suddenly disappeared. I turned around and looked for him in the crowd but he was gone.

The second time I saw him was only about five weeks ago. Do you remember I was going to travel to Europe for a business meeting?'

'Yes, I do,' answered his wife. 'But you decided not to go in the end. What happened?'

'Well, I was at the airport. My flight was going to leave in a few minutes and I went to the toilet before I got on the plane. As I was washing my hands I looked in the mirror to see if my hair was OK. It was then I saw a face appear in the mirror next to mine. It was the young boy again. The same white face with blood streaming from a cut on the side of his face. A shiver went down my back and I felt afraid.



Then the boy spoke.

‘Don’t get on this plane!’ he said. ‘You will never reach your destination.’

‘But I have an important meeting in Europe,’ I said.

There was a look of anger in the boy’s cold, staring eyes.

‘Listen to me!’ he said. ‘Don’t get on this flight .This flight is not for you!’

And just as suddenly as he had appeared, the boy disappeared from sight. I was sweating and scared. Then over the loudspeaker system, I heard:

‘Final call for flight CX45 to Frankfurt. Will all remaining passengers please board at Gate 76.’

I stayed in the toilet, too afraid to move. It was only when I heard the announcement that Flight CX45 had departed that I felt brave enough to leave the toilet.’

‘And what happened then?’ asked Susan.

‘I came home and slept. I slept for most of that day. The following morning, when I got up, I turned on the radio and heard the news:

‘Here is some breaking news: we have just heard that Flight CX45 bound for Frankfurt has crashed into the sea. There are no survivors.’

Chapter 6: Susan's Story

When Tony had finished his story, he sat back in the armchair. He seemed very tired but he felt better now. He had wanted to tell someone about the boy for a long time but he was afraid no one would believe him.

'That's really scary, Tony,' said Susan. Then she continued.

'I have also seen the young boy before, as you already guessed. Only once but I'll never forget it! I was camping at the beach with some girlfriends. About six months ago, do you remember? It was a humid, sticky evening and I wanted to go for a swim. My friends told me it was dangerous but I didn't listen to them. I told them not to worry.'

'I dived into the sea and felt better. The water was cool and refreshing. As you know, I'm not a strong swimmer, but the water was calm and I decided to swim out a little way. Then, suddenly, I could feel myself being carried out to sea by the current. I tried to swim to the shore but the beach was getting further and further away. I started to scream for help but I was too far from shore. No one could hear me. I became really tired and I couldn't swim any more. I started to sink. I thought I was going to drown right there. After what seemed like a long time, I felt someone, or something, take hold of my arm. I opened my eyes to see who was rescuing me.'

'The young boy, right?' asked Tony.

'Yes, right,' said Susan. 'I'll never forget those staring eyes and the cut down the side of his face. I was afraid but at the same time I knew he was saving me from a horrible death.'

'When we reached the shore, he pulled me up onto the beach and then suddenly disappeared. I lay there for a while to rest and then went back to my friends. I didn't tell them anything about what happened. I wasn't quite sure myself.'

'So what does all this mean?' asked Tony. 'What's happening?'

'I'm not sure,' said Susan, 'but it seems the young boy doesn't want us to die yet. That must be why he's saved us both from sure death.'

As soon as Susan finished speaking, a number of strange things happened all at the same time. The air in the room became very cold and the lights started to grow dim. Slowly the front door began to open. Tony and his wife shivered, not only because of the cold but also because they felt terribly afraid.

'What's happening, Tony?'

Before Tony could reply, the front door opened wide and they could just see a shadow entering the house.

Chapter 7: The Young Boy's Story

The young boy walked slowly through the door. He was staring at them both as he walked towards them. The air in the room had become icy cold and Susan could see her own breath. Tony and Susan shivered again, this time mostly through fear. The pale, ghostly figure of the young boy stood before them.

Neither Tony nor Susan had the courage to speak. They both wanted to escape from the room and keep running until the young boy was far behind them. But fear kept them glued to their seats.

The figure before them seemed to grow large and threatening. Finally, the young boy spoke.

'Tonight is not the first time we have met. You know that already.'

He turned his head to face Tony and continued.

'I have seen you twice before. Once on a busy road in the city and then again at the airport. Twice now I have saved your life.'

Then he turned to face Susan. 'And you, I have met you only once before, on a beach late at night. I saved you from a horrible death that night.' Then, turning to face them both, he explained why he had saved them.

'I have known for a long time,' he said, 'that there would be an accident this evening. I could do nothing to stop the accident. I was unable to prevent my own death, but I was able to make sure that my dear mother did not die with me this night. It was for this reason and this reason alone that I saved you both from death before this evening had taken its full course.'

Then the young boy stopped speaking. Susan could hear her heart beating fast and loudly. She was more afraid than she'd ever been in her life. She wished the

young boy would just disappear, as he had done before. But she knew that he wasn't going to go away so easily this time.

Then he spoke again. 'I ask for no more reward for saving you, except this final one.'

Tony had a bad feeling about this. He knew he wasn't going to like what was coming next.

'In exchange for saving both your lives, I now demand that my own life be given back to me so I can live together in peace with my dear mother. In order for this to happen, one of you must take my place. One of you must die for me. Then you will have both repaid your debts to me. I shall wait outside for you. You have thirty minutes to decide. Now, which one will it be?'

Chapter 8: The Final Choice

When they were alone inside the house, Tony and Susan felt a little bit better. 'Thank goodness he's gone!' said Tony. 'That was terrible.'

'Yes,' said Susan. 'But it's not finished yet, is it? He's waiting outside for one of us.'

Susan and Tony looked at each other for a long time. They couldn't believe what had just happened. It was like a long nightmare. And the worst part was still to come. They had to make a decision, didn't they?

A lot of thoughts were passing through both their minds. They knew there was no escape. One of them had to die to pay back their debts to the young boy. But which one? They had thirty minutes to decide.

Susan couldn't think of life without her darling Tony. She loved him so much. Should she give up her own life to save him?

Tony was thinking about the problem they were faced with. It seemed there was no way out. One of them had to die to repay their debts. Much as he loved his dear wife, he had already decided it wouldn't be him who walked outside to meet death. There was too much to live for. He could live without his wife, but no more English Premier League soccer? Never! But what to do? He needed a plan. Then, it came to him.

'I know what we'll do,' he said to Susan. 'It's clear that one of us has to go, and much as I love you, I feel we should make this a fair chance for both of us. I'll put two glass marbles inside this paper bag. One black marble and one white marble. We will both choose one marble. Whoever chooses the black marble from the bag has to go with the young boy. You can choose first.'

Susan couldn't believe what she was hearing. They were going to play a game to decide who lived and who died! But, in reality, she had no better idea, and the thirty minutes would soon be over.

'OK,' she agreed. Put the marbles inside the bag. I'll choose first. So he found a paper bag and reached into a cupboard for a bag of marbles he kept there. He turned his back to her while he put the marbles in the bag but she could see out of the corner of her eye that he put two black marbles inside the bag.

'You horrible man!' she thought. 'And I thought you loved me!'

Susan was so angry now that she decided to play her own game. Her brain was forming a plan of her own now.

'OK,' said Tony. 'Here's the bag. Choose one marble. Don't forget, if it's black, you go. If it's white, I go.'

So Susan put her hand inside the bag and picked out a marble. Of course, it was black, but she didn't show Tony that. She kept her hand tightly closed.

'OK,' said Tony. 'What colour is it?'

Before he could say anything else, Susan ran to the window and threw the marble out into the darkness and into a stream which ran behind their house.

'What are you doing?' called Tony. 'Why did you do that?'

'Don't worry,' said Susan. 'We just need to look inside the bag. If the marble inside the bag is white, then I must have chosen the black one. If that's so, then I will go with the young boy. If the marble left inside the bag is black, then I must have chosen the white one. In which case, you have to go with the young boy. Now, let's take a look at the marble that's left inside the bag!'