

Enjoy Your Time: A Short Story [B1]

Che cosa succede se, per la prima volta nella sua vita, una donna si lascia alle spalle il passato e inizia a pensare alla propria felicità?

Marianne glanced at her phone. She'd put it on silent mode when she'd arrived at the villa on the Costa del Sol, anticipating the bombardment of texts and phone calls. It was just past 6pm. Seamus would have just arrived home and discovered the children alone, and his wife of fourteen years gone. She'd call him later, to let him know she was alive and well. But she'd make him suffer a little first. Let him prepare dinner for their two children. Let him help them with their homework. Let him intervene if they fought and counsel them if they got emotional and confiscate their phones if they refused to go to bed. Let him do all the parenting she'd been doing alone for thirteen years, since their first child, Eamon, was born. "Another cocktail?" asked the waiter in his thick Spanish accent, interrupting her thoughts. "Sí, por favor," said Marianne, using one of the only Spanish phrases she knew. The waiter nodded and she shot him a flirtatious look. But flirting was all she would do. She had never cheated on her husband and she was certain he had never cheated on her. That had never been their problem. Their problem was... everything else. Marianne sighed as she reflected on her life and the decisions she'd made. She'd got married young, at twenty-four, to Seamus, who satisfied her criteria: handsome, but not too handsome (diminishing the probability that he would attract other women and cheat on her), a few years older than her (because she'd read that men matured later than women), and with a decent career as a veterinarian (so guaranteeing them financial security.) She hadn't married Seamus because she'd been in love with him, but because she'd decided that to be happy she'd have to achieve a series of objectives: start her career by twenty-two, be married by twenty-five, have two children by thirty. And then she could live happily ever after. The problem was that the "happily ever after" never came. She'd been so preoccupied with achieving her objectives that she'd never considered what her version of happiness was, as opposed to society's version of what happiness should be. No doubt Seamus would think she'd left because of the fight they'd had at the weekend. It was the same fight they'd been having

since Eamon was born, and then their second child, Annabelle, two years later. Both she and Seamus had successful careers and contributed to the family [expenses](#). And yet he still expected her to do all the parenting and domestic [duties](#), simply because she was a woman. Marianne's friends were horrified by his attitude, but she understood the origins of it; his parents were conservative and believed that a woman's place was in the home. When Eamon was two, his mother had told Marianne that she was fortunate that Seamus even [allowed](#) her to have a career. Allowed! Marianne had known by then that she'd married a chauvinist, but she'd been too invested in their relationship to do anything about it. Becoming a divorcee and single mother had never been part of her plan! So, what had changed her mind? It hadn't been the fight, or the hundreds of similar fights before that. It had been a simple exchange with a stranger, a [tailor](#) in the centre of Galway. She'd taken one of her mother's old dresses to him to have it [mended](#) so she could wear it that summer. The dress was old, but it looked new — new but vintage, which was [all the rage](#) these days. The [tailor](#) did a fantastic job, and after she'd thanked and paid him, he said three simple words that would change her life. Instead of saying "Goodbye" or "Hope to see you again" or the popular American response "Have a nice day!", he said: "Enjoy your time." She paused, not knowing how to respond, and in the end, she said nothing. But all the way home, those three words resonated in her head. "Enjoy your time." Because her time, like everyone's time, was limited. She was thirty-eight, probably halfway through her life, and she'd always been too preoccupied with achieving her objectives to allow herself to enjoy her time. But that was about to change. She was going to divorce Seamus. She was going to divide the custody and responsibility of their two children with him. She was going to force him to become a modern-day father. And she was going to replace the old objectives in her head with only one: happiness, in any form. With that decided, [she raised](#) her hand to order another cocktail.

Glossary

- **his wife of fourteen years** = sua moglie da quattordici anni
- **nodded** = fare un cenno di assenso
- **sighed** = sospirare
- **mended** = rammendare
- **all the rage** = alla moda
- **live happily ever after** = vivere per sempre felice
- **tailor** = sarto
- **she raised** = alzare
- **cheated** = imbrogliare
- **reflected on** = riflettere su
- **expenses** = spese
- **duties** = compiti
- **glanced** = dare un'occhiata
- **allowed** = permettere