



Lost Love and Other Stories

Jan Carew



About the author

Jan Carew is a teacher who teaches story-writing at the University of Cardiff in Wales. She has written over fifteen books for young people. She is very interested in different places and cultures and travels as often as she can.

Summary

All the stories in this book have one thing in common – one or more strange things happen. In *Lost Love*, a young man runs out of petrol on a deserted country road. As he looks for somewhere to buy petrol, he meets a beautiful girl who offers to help him. The girl takes him to her family's home in a small village. The young man soon realises that this is a strange village – the people are dressed in old-fashioned clothes, they cook over a wood fire and they use horses instead of cars. The girl's father has never even heard of petrol! As the evening wears on, the girl becomes sad and tells the young man he has to leave. The young man tells the girl he is in love with her and that he will return. When he finally reaches the town and goes to the garage to buy petrol, the young man asks about the strange village. It is then that he learns the strange truth – the village was destroyed 350 years earlier during the English Civil War, and the village and the people who live there only reappear in our time once every ten years. The young man decides that his love for the girl is greater than his love for the present day and decides to be there the next time the village appears, and to stay with the girl in her time.

In *The Doll*, a lonely man called Mr Brown buys an old doll that he sees in a shop window on his way home from work. It turns out to be a very bad decision. Strange things start to happen almost immediately. On the bus,

an unknown voice insults the ticket man, who thinks that Mr Brown was responsible. When he gets home with the doll, the strange things continue to happen. Mr Brown puts the doll on the table, but when he wakes up he finds it on his bed. The doll also seems to have opened Mr Brown's letters! On the bus to work, the voice returns to insult an old woman. Mr Brown is sure that he left the doll in the house, but when he opens his case, he sees the doll is there. This doll really does have a mind of its own! He wants to get rid of the doll and leaves it on the street, but after work the doll is waiting for him at the bus stop. Mr Brown runs home, but later that night, the doll has returned to the house and smashes his crockery. Mr Brown buries the doll in the garden, but the doll escapes. The doll finally kills Mr Brown by pushing him into a fire he has built to destroy the doll once and for all.

The Other Man is the story of a writer who shuts himself away in a small room to write a book. One day his pen disappears from the table, but this is only the start of the strange things which happen to him. He sees a man in the mirror. The man looks exactly like him except for one detail – the writer is clean-shaven but the other man has a beard. When the man appears to him at night, the writer decides it is time to leave the room ... but he has left it too late. The man with the beard tells him he can never leave, and soon he has taken over his life. The writer has become invisible, unable to move or speak. Even when the writer's friend comes to the room, he believes that nothing strange has happened. He believes that the man with the beard is the writer. The writer has grown a beard, that's all.

The Charm asks the reader to consider the question – What makes a person brave? In the story, the narrator is not a brave man, he is shy and afraid until an old blind man whom he meets by chance gives him a charm and assures him that nothing bad will happen to him. He believes in the power of the charm and lives through several battles with the charm in his possession. But one day, after inspiring a group of soldiers to follow him into attack, he realises that he has lost the charm. For a moment, he feels afraid again, until he realises that truly brave people are ones who are afraid, but still do dangerous or courageous things.

The final story, *Journey's End*, shows a possible pitfall of knowing the future. Tom, an unemployed young man, has his fortune told and learns that, if he travels on the following Friday, he will never arrive. When the man is



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offered a job interview in a town 30 kilometres away, he is delighted, until he realises that the interview is scheduled for Friday. Unhappily, he decides to take the risk. The prediction turns out to be accurate. The train suddenly comes to a stop and the young man never arrives at his destination. But the story ends happily. An old man, whom Tom befriended on the train, offers him a job in one of his shops. If Tom had stayed at home because of the fortune-teller's words, he would never have met the old man or got the job. In this case, the strangeness is in the way that the future can turn out.

Background and themes

English Civil War: The village in the first story was destroyed by Oliver Cromwell. He was the leader of the republican forces, called Roundheads, who fought the royalist forces or Cavaliers during the English Civil War (1642–1649). One of the main causes of the war was that the King, Charles I, refused to let Parliament meet between 1629 and 1640. This period was known as the Eleven Years Tyranny. Charles I believed in the divine right of kings and attempted to raise taxes from the people without the consent of Parliament. Charles recalled Parliament in 1640 because he needed them to give him money in order to finance a war with the Scots. Relations between the King and Parliament were very bad and finally, in 1642, Charles sent soldiers to Parliament in order to try to arrest some of his critics. The Civil War was soon to begin. Seven years later, the republicans won the war and Charles I was executed. But the republic did not last for long. In 1658, Oliver Cromwell died and in 1660, the heir to the throne returned to restore the monarchy as Charles II.

Lost in time: Time travel is an important theme of the first story in this collection. The story of the village which reappears every ten years is reminiscent of the story of the Broadway musical *Brigadoon* – made into a Hollywood film in 1954. *Brigadoon* is about a Scottish village which reappears every one hundred years, but to its inhabitants, each century is like one day. It is based on a much older German story about a mythical village.

Living dolls: The theme of the malevolent living doll in the second story has also been explored in an episode of the American television series *The Twilight Zone*. In the episode called *Living Doll*, a man, played by Telly Savalas, tries to get rid of his daughter's new talking doll, but he ends up falling to his death in an 'accident'.

Doppelgangers: The word “doppelgänger” derives from the German *Doppel* (double) and *Gänger* (walker). The word can be used to refer to someone who is acting in the same way as another person, or to describe the impression of having seen a double of oneself, like in the story *The Other Man*. Seeing a doppelganger is usually considered to be a sign of bad luck and even as an omen of death.

Lucky charms: These have long been in use in Western culture. Some of the items more commonly considered to bring good luck include things such as a four-leaved clover, a rabbit's foot, a horse-shoe and a wishbone. It is also fairly common for people to wear a charm bracelet in order to keep several lucky charms together in the same place.

Fortune telling: The practice of fortune telling is not generally well-viewed in Western European societies. And yet it remains very popular with the public. Indeed, many national newspapers include a column on fortune telling in the form of astrological predictions. In Britain, for instance, some astrologers have become household names on television. Apart from astrology, some of the commonest methods used by fortune tellers include card reading, crystal ball gazing and palmistry.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- 1 **Discuss:** Write a short sentence on the board describing something strange or unusual that has happened to you or somebody you know (it doesn't have to be true!) Working with the whole class, tell the students to ask you questions to find out more about what happened. Write their questions on the board. After you have answered five questions, the students must say whether they think the story is true or not. Then tell the students to write a short sentence themselves. When everybody has written their sentence, put the students in groups of four and have them continue the activity. At the end, each group elects which of the four stories was the most interesting and presents it the whole class. The rest of the class must guess if it true or not.

Lost Love

After reading

- 2 **Discuss:** How different was life 350 years ago? Have students work in small groups first. Draw two columns on the board labelled 'similarities' and 'differences'. Then ask each group to report to the whole class and put words into each column as the discussion progresses.



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- 3 **Discuss:** Tell the students, working in the same groups as for activity 3, to consider their answer to the following question: *Would you like to go back in time? Why/why not?* After they have discussed the question in their groups for ten minutes or so, call on some of the groups to report back to the whole class.
- 4 **Research:** For homework, tell the students to do some research into the English Civil War. You may like to set the students some questions; such as *When did the war take place? Who were the leaders of each side? Where did the fighting take place? What happened to the King? etc.*

The Doll

Before reading

- 5 **Guess:** Ask students to look at the picture on page 7. Working in small groups they describe the picture and then try to guess what is going to happen. Write the student's suggestions up on the board.

After reading

- 6 **Role play:** Put the students in pairs. Tell them to imagine they are television journalists. They are going to interview either Mr Brown or the doll. They can ask a maximum of eight questions. Tell the students to prepare a list of questions they would like to ask. After a few minutes, get the students to act out the interview – with one member of each pair playing the journalist and the other playing either Mr Brown or the doll. Tell them to practise it a few times and then to switch roles. Finally ask different pairs to perform their interview in front of the whole class.
- 7 **Write:** Tell the students to imagine what happens to the doll after Mr Brown dies in the fire. Does anybody take it home, or is it left outside? Working individually, students write the story.

The Other Man

Before reading

- 8 **Pair work:** Working in pairs, the students describe the picture on page 13. What is strange about the picture? Conduct a brief feedback session with the whole class, writing up the key vocabulary on the board.

After reading

- 9 **Discuss:** Is there a rational explanation for the events in this story? Put the students into small groups and tell them they have to think of an answer to the above question. Give them fifteen minutes to prepare and then call on each of the groups to present their explanation to the rest of the class.

- 10 **Role play:** Put the students into pairs. Tell them to imagine that the narrator decides to go to the police to tell them about the man with the beard. Ask the students to think of the questions that the police would want to ask him. After a few minutes, get the pairs to act out the interview. Invite one or two pairs to perform their interview in front of the whole class.

The Charm

After reading

- 11 **Discuss:** At the bottom of page 19, the narrator says – *Brave men are afraid, too.* Write this sentence on the board. Ask a student to read the sentence out loud and then say if they agree or disagree with it (you may need to pre-teach the expressions *I agree / I disagree*). Tell them to give one reason for their answer. Then move on to another student and ask them if they agree with the first student and why. Continue around the class in the same way until everybody has given their opinion. Write up any new vocabulary items on the board.
- 12 **Discuss:** Put the students into groups. Ask them to say whether they have a lucky charm and if so, what it is and how they think it may have helped them in the past.

Journey's End

Before reading

- 13 **Guess:** Tell the students to look at the pictures on pages 21 and 24. Working with the whole class, ask the students to describe what is happening in each picture. Write their suggestions up on the board. Then put the students into pairs and tell them to imagine what is going to happen in the story. *How is the first picture linked to the second picture?* After fifteen minutes, conduct a feedback session with the whole class.

After reading

- 14 **Role play:** Put the students into groups of three. Tell them to write out the conversation between Tom, the old man, and the guard on page 23 as if it were a stage play. Then each group performs the conversation until they can do it without reading the text.
- 15 **Write:** The students work in pairs to write a letter from Tom to his parents in which he tells them how he came to find a job in a sports shop.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.