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## **The Elements of Fiction, Illustrated**

### Plot

Once upon a time, Protagonist fell passionately in love with Prime Love Interest. They planned a grand wedding. However, Protagonist felt compelled to sneak off with Secondary Love Interest. Meanwhile, Antagonist made eyes at Prime Love Interest, who warded him off. Next, Antagonist and Secondary Love Interest plotted to poison Protagonist. At his deathbed, Prime Love Interest killed herself with a knife, asp, gun, or by jumping into the ocean—or maybe grief just swallowed her up.

Afterward, Antagonist and Secondary Love Interest got married. They fight every day with poison words, often wrecking things.

And they lived unhappily ever after, till the day they died!

(but the children carry on)

### Theme

Profound Meaning lingered subtly in the air. Profound Meaning could be smelled, tasted, touched, and heard as a low humming, but never seen. Characters fell in love, laughed, suffered, and died, all transporting Profound Meaning on an ocean of emotion. Secondary Meaning was introduced, a pale shadow in the distance. Profound Meaning echoed in the sunrise. Secondary Meaning tip toed cautiously forward. Profound meaning filled the looming darkness. Secondary Meaning lay near death, abandoned in a crowded hospital ward (but Obscure Critic is attempting to revive her.)

### Character

Protagonist was beset by a tragic flaw that tore her apart. She wanted this and she wanted that, she felt too deeply and not deeply enough. Prime Love Interest suffered profoundly and broke the affair off. Or was it all Prime Love Interest's fault for being so selfish? Was he born this way or had his parents taught him the wrong lessons about life? Still, Protagonist's fatal flaw allowed Antagonist, who was something of a flat character, to manipulate Protagonist toward her doom. Meanwhile, Secondary Antagonist was so underdeveloped as to be laughable. Why am I here, she briefly asked, then thoughtlessly created obstacles—was she seeking revenge? Taking advantage, Antagonist verged on triumph. Protagonist attempted to redeem herself with a final noble action, but it washed away like wavelets against a stern rockface shore.

### Symbolism

Phalluses rained down in three forms: a weapon—perhaps a sword or a pistol—conveying profound glory or heroism, or was it the folly and horror of violence; a cigar that was much, much more than a just a cigar; and an aboriginal relic that ended up shattered (or had it been reconstructed?). Meanwhile, Protagonist and Prime Love interest were lost in a cave—or was it an enormous womb—through which they wandered awaiting rebirth. Or was it a dark forest? Were they together, or wandering separately? At some point, Spring came, pregnant with new life—and Protagonist, too, was pregnant with love, and, perhaps, with an actual fetus. But already, in the distance, winter loomed. It is looming still.

### Setting

Powerful streaks of something, perhaps eerie perhaps lovely, suffused the sky, creating atmosphere. Weather pummeled or caressed Protagonist and Antagonist as they embarked on their adventure. Rolling hills and meadows stretched to the horizon—or was it a wilderness of mountains and thick trees, or clusters of buildings blotting out the sun? Whatever it was, it permeated the story.

### Irony

Wow, that was unexpected!

Climax

Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, Ooh, Ooooooh, Auuuugh, oh, oh, oh, Oooooooooohhhh!

(Will a baby be born from this, a kind of sequel?)