

Furious Fiction is a monthly flash fiction contest run by the Australian Writers Centre and open to entries worldwide. In this competition writers are given 55 hours to write a story in no more than 500 words and including a set of assigned words and/or prompts. For this month's story the assigned criteria were:

- Each story had to begin on the side of a road.
- Each story must include the words APRON, PIGMENT, RIBBON, ICON, LEMON
- Each story had to include a splash.

Castaway

There are a few fleeting seconds, somewhere between the harsh light of the grey clouds forcing its way through the narrow cracks of my swollen eyelids, and the realisation I'm still alive, before the pain hits me. The dreary light high above indicates it's already well into the day by the time I have returned to the land of the living.

My skull throbs like the bones are trying to rearrange themselves into some new shape. My tongue is dry as sand and the clouds, like throbbing pain in my head, seem to have no intention of clearing until well into the afternoon. As consciousness returns images of the events leading me to where I've washed up turn over in my mind in jumbled fragments like tumbled glass.

I'm returning to my body now, mentally checking off everything is still intact and able to move, albeit gingerly...arms...legs.

I fumble for my wallet, relieved to find it still in my pocket, distressed to find the light crisp large denomination bills which had resided there the evening before now gone, replaced with a hefty weight of loose coins.

"They say," Jeremy had announced while holding court at the bar, "If you avoid drinks with a darker pigment you won't suffer a hangover."

Jeremy is sadly mistaken. How many Tequila Highball's with a splash of soda and lemon had we consumed?

There's an angry buzzing inside my head.

Slowly, I force myself to sit. This could've been a mistake. A blur of movement makes me feel dizzy all over again and for a moment I'm not sure whether it's me or my surroundings which are moving. A wave of nausea washes over me. As my eyes finally focus I realise

something is very wrong with my surroundings. I am deserted. A castaway, stranded on an island alone.

Not quite alone. The buzzing it turns out is not just coming from inside my head.

I rub my eyes in case it should change the situation I'm surveying. It doesn't.

There is a deep guttural snarl to my side. Trucks circle like sharks, their tyres leaving black trails on the surrounding apron at the edge of the island.

As I stagger to my feet atop a grassy rise in the centre of the concrete atoll, I can see beyond the roundabout to where the road wends its way up the hill like a thin black ribbon in the direction of home, but there's no way of crossing to safety. I'm marooned.

Stranded, I'm about to capitulate, sinking back into the grassy knoll in defeat when a shape approaches from the distance. I recognise the distinctive icon atop the vessel and wave frantically, hoping he'll rescue me from my place of exile.

The cab slows, but passes me by. Despairing I drop to my knees, before realising he has come around again for a second pass. I clutch at the loose coins in my pocket. It seems I may be about to be rescued after all.