

## Sibling Rivalry

Holly and her sister, Kate, always had a volatile relationship growing up. Holly hadn't spoken to Kate in three years, since their mother passed. And of course, Kate liked to throw it in Holly's face whenever possible. They never had a good relationship as fighting over attention or toys turned into heart piercing insults and fist fights. Holly was sure that Kate was jealous of her, the youngest. But how was that Holly's fault? So, the best thing for the women to do was avoid one another. That was until Mike, Holly's boyfriend, had a brilliant idea one day.

"We're graduating this year," Mike had said, "Call a truce with your sister, I'd love to meet her."

So, Holly invited Kate to spend the weekend in town, all expenses paid, including her hotel.

The dinner was a mess, just as Holly knew it would be. ~~Kate~~ Kate's bitter, cynical behavior put everyone on edge as she bitched and moaned about Holly's neglectful behavior, using personal family problems to embarrass her in front of Mike, and his parents. Fed up, Holly decided to take Kate back to her hotel much earlier than expected.

On the bone chilling January night, the big, heavy snowflakes came down, coating the roads of the mountain college town in a sleek white layer of ice.

*Great.* Holly thought, realizing she'd have to drive undesirably slow.

**Commented [HS1]:** Right off the bat, I'd cut this and weave these details into the dialogue and action that follows. Starting off with backstory isn't a good idea in a novel when you have all the time in the world to do it. In flash fiction and short fiction especially, you don't want to drown your readers in set up. Get going in the action and sprinkle the backstory details along the way. Your readers are smart. They will figure all this out. And they'll appreciate you trusting them to figure it out on their own.

**Commented [HS2]:** If you cut the first paragraph, that frees up some word count room for you to elaborate just briefly on this conversation and give Holly a voice and some quick character building (appearance, mannerisms, personality, whatever).

**Commented [HS3]:** Yeah, this is much too late in the short story to be hearing from Holly for the first time.

“Why did you want to go here? Who wants to live in the mountains where it’s nearly impossible drive? I mean, we’ve been sliding around like crazy, ~~H~~ hopefully we don’t go off a cliff,” Kate complained.

Holly didn’t answer.

“So, you’re mad?”

Still no answer.

“You shouldn’t’ve invited me here if you ~~—,~~”

**Commented [HS4]:** Use an em-dash to show interruption.

“Why are you such a bitch?” Holly finally asked.

Kate ~~scuffed~~ scoffed. “Excuse me?”

“I said ~~—,~~”

“I heard you,” Kate snapped.

“So, can you provide an answer?”

**Commented [HS5]:** Unless she saying this incredibly sarcastically, then it sounds rather unnatural.

“What are you talking about?!”

**Commented [HS6]:** Try to make your narrative and dialogue strong enough that you don’t need to use methods like this to portray the tone of your character. It isn’t correct and editors don’t want to see it. A simple ! or ? should suffice.

“You told Mike I was a *whore* in high school.”

“You were.”

“Then you had the audacity to ask him if he planned on abandoning his parents when they were on their death beds, while they were sitting there! What the *hell* is your problem?”

“Well, that’s what you did. So, I thought it was a legitimate question.”

"You're so *petty*, Kate. I didn't abandon mom! I went to college! "

"Yeah. You ran away to this side of the country and you're using college as an excuse.

You can't bullshit me, Holly."

"Bullshit you? You're just mad because you were stuck there! Which was your decision, by the way. Mom understood that I *had* to come here for school because that's what I wanted! She supported it!"

Kate ~~scuffed~~scoffed as she faced the passenger window. "You should've gone somewhere closer to home. Mom was sick, I needed you, and all you did was worry about yourself. You've always been a selfish cunt."

Holly *hated* that word. Infuriated, she started to drive faster as if possibility of sliding on the icy road had vanished. She wanted Kate away from her, ~~F~~Fast.

"You're not even woman enough to admit when you're wrong," Kate spat.

"Just because you're lonely, doesn't mean you need to make it my problem. You decided to devote your life to taking care of mom. You did! I went according to *my* plan. To make a living for *myself*. I'm not sorry for that! So you can—~~—~~,"

In Holly's fit of rage, she missed the left turn and slid through the intersection. Panicking, she stomped on the brakes, trying to stop the car from sliding toward the river that lay adjacent to the coming dead end. The vehicle bolted down hill anyway, smashing through the metal railing and plummeted into the river.

"Holly!" Kate screamed. "I'm scared!"

**Commented [HS7]:** So do !! It made me cringe.  
\*\*shudder\*\*

Ignoring Kate's cries, Holly had pounded at the air bag in front of her and searched for the seat belt fastener.

"Holly!" Kate cried.

Holly successfully pulled her seat belt free and went to open the door. Jammed. She then punched at the passenger window button, and it rolled down. The river flooded the passenger compartment faster as it flowed into the open window, engulfing the sedan into its mass.

"Help me, Holly!"

Holly peered over at Kate, who was clawing at the seat belt, crying like a child. Holly would be just as petrified if she couldn't swim too.

"Don't just stare! Help me!" Kate screamed.

Holly quickly decide against her sister's desperate request and swam, treading water away from the sinking car.

"PLEASE! HOLLY! HELP!"

Holly swam toward the hill side where the railing was split. Once Holly reached shore, she turned to see nothing but the dark, still lake surface.

Upon hearing sirens, she climbed up the grassy hill side to the road. People were running toward her, trying to figure out what the ~~commotion commission~~ was. Crying and out of breath, she sprinted to the first man, screaming, "My sister is in there! Help her! Please, help her!"

**Commented [HS8]:** Same comment as above, regarding double punctuation.

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Holly's wet clothes clung to her body along with the bone chilling winter breeze and the thick snowflakes that continued to fall, covering the tracks from her car in the street.

As the man wrapped Holly with his coat, she couldn't help but to smile to herself.

Finally, she was away from Kate, for good, just as she always preferred.

I would probably give this final scene more of your attention. You could easily cut the conversation between the sisters in the car; the point that they hate each other is made quickly. In fact, you spend most of this story telling me and showing me through their actions and words that they hate each other. Instead, dedicate those words to 1. Giving a little more drama to the moment Holly decides to leave, maybe giving Kate a little more real trouble than just "she's too panicked to unbuckle," as it seems a little more contrived, and 2. Slowing down and filling this last moment with Holly's thoughts. She just basically murdered her sister, so yeah. We know she's happy about that. But let us in her brain a little bit. Slow down and give us the scene around her, within her, etc. The captivating part of this story is going to be Holly's internal monologue, not the events. The events are dramatic, but not unique. So you need to plant your uniqueness in Holly as a character.

Thanks for letting me read. Hope my comments are helpful for you!