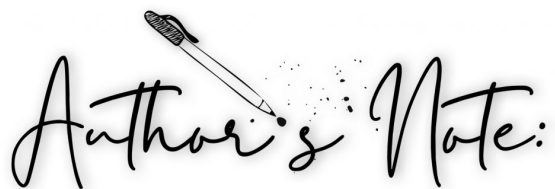


Once vibrant with laughter, an enchantment struck the fairy's realm and cloaked them in eternal night. Only the stars overhead and the full round moon lit their path, but soon icy darkness overcame them.

Until, one day, deep within the forest, a young fairy heard a faint stuttering tick. Curious, she searched until she uncovered a tarnished silver object. Behind its cracked face, two thin arms struggled to move. Intrigued, she reached for it, and the item glowed. When she twisted the knob, it vibrated, and frightened, she dropped it. As the sun rose, she stared wide-eyed at the sky.



Excited at the prospect of writing a fairy tale, my delight soon waned. I wrestled with words demanding they fit into sentences and tell the story. They sneered and jeered at me, pointing out that I was putting them in all the wrong places. It became one of those writing adventures that made me wonder why I continue to restrict myself to one hundred words. Eventually, I pulled up my [favorite thesaurus](#) and began replacing words, trialing each new one until the story slowly took shape.

Twenty-four versions, Dear Reader, that's how many it took to bring us to the piece you read today. Do I have further answers about the mysterious pocket watch? I do not, but perhaps if you ask the fairy nicely enough, she can enlighten you. Maybe she'll even tell you her name.

The Reluctant Author

A simple line drawing of a pen nib, positioned horizontally and centered under the word "Author" in the title.