

Stories of Ourselves

“The Hollow of the Three Hills”

A young woman seeks the help of a withered hag to learn what has happened to her parents, husband and child whom she abandoned to commit sin. She finds that her parents are broken-hearted, her husband distraught and her child dead. She herself dies on the spot.

“The Moving Finger”

Theme of Story The story appears to be about love and how it can be deceiving. The death of both Mr Grancy's wives, the dreadful first marriage and the love affair between Claydon and the second Mrs Grancy can each relate to the idea that love isn't perfect and isn't easy. The aging of the painting can be seen as representing how love can become selfish and can represent how love can become possessive.

“Sredni Vashtar”

The story concerns a ten-year-old boy called Conradin, who lives with his strict cousin and guardian, Mrs. De Ropp. Conradin rebels against her and invents a new religion for himself, which centres on idolising a polecat-ferret he calls Sredni Vashtar; a vengeful, merciless god. Conradin keeps the polecat hidden in a cage in the garden shed, and worships the idol in secret. The story comes to a climax when his cousin sets out to discover his god.

“Elephant”

In Elephant, a man is driven to the end of his tether by his family who are always taking money from him. He sends his mother a cheque every month because she guilt trips him about being alone and how nobody cares about her etc. He sends his sister a cheque every month because her lover is a layabout slob and she's afraid she won't be able to feed the kids. He sends his ex-wife a cheque every month to pay for his children. He sends his wastrel son a cheque every month because he's off exploring America to 'find' himself. He reaches breaking point when his brother starts to borrow money as well.

“The Lady in the Looking Glass”

Sitting in the drawing room of a house in the country, an un-named narrator describes scenes outside the house that can be seen reflected in a mirror in the hall. Isabella Tyson, the owner of the house, has gone into the garden to gather flowers. The narrator speculates which type of flowers will best describe her, and realises that even after knowing her for many years such comparisons are meaningless because they do not establish a reliable ‘truth’ about a person.

The narrator feels an urgent need to uncover hitherto unknown information about her hostess. She pictures her in the lower garden dressed in her expensive and fashionable clothes. Isabella is rich, successful, distinguished – and the narrator wants to know the contents of her hidden depths. The narrator tries to imagine what the nature of Isabella’s thoughts must be, and conjectures that they will be like the drawing room – full of shadows and light. And then Isabella herself becomes visible in the mirror, returning from the garden. The narrator then has a new vision of the ‘truth’ about Isabella. She isn’t thinking wonderful thoughts at all; she has no friends; and the letters are all bills – which Isabella doesn’t even bother to open.

“The Prison”

In this story Malamud shifts his focus from Jews to Italian. Tommy first thought he had a chance to realize the American dream fast by joining a group of teenagers with fast cars, fast girls, and ready money, but he just barely managed to escape being jailed.

After roaming in vast Texas looking for another chance, he comes back home defeated and find himself, at only 29, a prisoner in his own store. What makes Tommy a pathetic figure is the intensity of his awareness, his strong feeling of being trapped. “All the present trouble,” he thinks, started when he joined in with the teenage gang which led “to the holdup of a liquor store.”

When he catches the little girl stealing, he sees an image of himself in her, and she awakes paternal feelings of protection in him, intensified by his own childlessness. He wants to save her from his own fate, his own loss of freedom and opportunity, to the point of striking his own wife in order to protect the little thief. His life would not be all vain if he could protect someone from committing his own mistakes. But the child, by sticking out her tongue at him, refuses his paternity and deepens his sense of failure.

“Billenium”

The story is set in the future where the world is becoming increasingly overpopulated, with a population of around 20 billion. In the city inhabited by the two protagonists, John Ward and Henry Rossiter, there is a mass shortage of space and the people live in small cellular rooms where they are charged by ceiling space. The city streets are enormously crowded, resulting in occasional pedestrian congestions that last days at a time.

The story revolves around Ward and Rossiter's combined discovery of a secret, larger-than-average room adjacent to their rented cubicle. As the two bask in the extra personal space that they have never known, things become complicated when they allow two other close friends to share the space, and the ensuing snowball effect of their invitees bringing family to live in the room. In the end, the "luxurious" space comes to be the same type of crowded cubicle that they were trying to escape from in the first place.

“The Enemy”

The Enemy At the beginning of the story the boy is narrating the story of his life and why he thought he mother was his enemy. In the first half of the story he talks how his father thought him how to be a better person before he died. He talks about the anger his mother felt for his father because he gave more love to him and shared more special moments with him. In the second part they he tells us how his father died and that they had to move to another town. In the town his mother didn't worried for him and let him do what ever he wanted but there were always serious consequences. His mother always hit him and made him suffered. But it was then when he was closed to death, and he saw his mother in tears when he realized that she wasn't his enemy, but the person that loved him the most. Yet he didn't feel compassion for her.

“Report on the Threatened City”

The story is set in the late 1970 through early 1971 in San Francisco. Doris wrote the story as though it was a report from the aliens sent to earth to warn a city of impending disaster. The story is written in third person limited. Although you know what the general population is thinking about, the narrator only knows this due to his ability to read minds. It's an alien from an unknown place, no other characteristics except his ability to change shape and form are portrayed. It gives a subjective view of the human race. The humans just don't care. That they ignore signs of impending death and continue as though nothing happened.

“The Bath”

The story centres on the routines of an old woman’s life and the annual preparation for, and visit to, the grave of her husband, seventeen years dead. Within this central event the story focuses closely on a succession of domestic details and arrangements necessary to carry out this visit.

“Real Time”

A couple goes to a memorial for a woman who has committed suicide. Chaudhuri turns an awkward memorial service into a way of looking at the fractured Bengali society: "I wondered what the ceremony would be like for a suicide, and what it would mean to a family like that and in the present history of the Bengali middle class. This particular culture is dispersed all over the world and has outlived its moment of definition.