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By [Eric Roe](#)

Eric Roe teaches composition and creative writing at North Carolina State University, where he earned his MFA. His work as appeared in the Best American Fantasy anthology, Redivider, Barrelhouse, Fugue, and Midway journal, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize [Find out more about Eric.](#)

September 29th, 2012

[Thoughts](#)

This is a true story. This really happened. This is how it happened. It was like this. The following is based on a true story. Some of the names have been changed. Some of the details have been changed. To protect the innocent. To protect the guilty. To protect the author. Every story is true. Every story has an element of truth. What is important in a story is not that it tells the truth, but that it contains what we may call poetic truth. What

follows is fiction, but it is autobiographical fiction. The following has been inspired by real events. The following is simply a story with no basis whatsoever in fact. I made it up. I invented the whole thing. None of this really happened. None of the following bears any resemblance to real life. Except for those parts that do. Except for those parts for which it was necessary to draw on actual experience. But the details have been changed. Except for those parts where it was necessary to get the details right in order to build a strong foundation for the imminent suspension of disbelief. Such details may resemble details based in reality. And certain characteristics of certain characters, these too may be drawn from real people the author may or may not have actually known. In fact, the author has taken this story too far into his head, mixed it for too long with day-to-day life and with people he has known, for him to be able to adequately separate reality from fantasy. It's all muddled. We're not even sure if the author is a he. Perhaps a pseudonym is being used. Perhaps a pseudonym is not being used, but this does not offer any guarantees that the author is at all clear with regard to his or her own gender. At any rate, this is not about me, him, her, whomever. Formalists, please intervene here. I'm sorry, we seem to have lost track of the subject. The point is this: I heard a story once. This story was told to me, and I am passing it on. The one who told me this story swears that it was true. I understand that the past tense implies the story is no longer true. Stories are changed in the telling. Stories are further changed in the retelling. Sometimes a story's truth can only be reached by way of its fiction. Sometimes the truth of a story is too difficult to get at. Some of the following may be true in some respects. Our story begins like this: Once upon a time.

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