

500 word fast fiction to include all the words: Knitted/Agricultural/Womens' Institute/Waltz/Pig or any animal

Elizabeth Shove

I'd been thinking about leaving her for a decade or more. We'd been married for 53 years and had two children, grown up now and with families of their own. There were never any big arguments and on the face of it we had all we could wish for. I had the lawn to mow and I went swimming once a week. My routine was set, but I wasn't content. Surely there was more to life than this?

The only solution was to leave. I'd got it all planned: where I'd stay, how the finances would be settled and what would happen to the house. As far as I could tell she didn't have a clue: she was occupied with her craft projects and her circle of friends, and she didn't pay any attention to me at all. Even so, I kept putting off the date of my departure – always finding one excuse or another.

The local agricultural show was set for 6th September, quite late in the season as these things go. It's one of the largest events of the year, and for the last few months she's been busy making things for the Womens' Institute stall: knitted tea cosies, specially dyed fabric, and who knows what else.

They always have a traditional fairground ride and we used to enjoy the swaying movement of the cars spinning on the undulating floor – it felt like we were doing a Waltz together. It was different now. Other couples queued to take their turn, but not us.

I went over to see the pigs: washed and brushed and snuffling around in their pens. I like pigs but my real favourites are the sheep, and especially the rare breed rams with their magnificent curly horns. There were rosettes pinned to almost every enclosure.

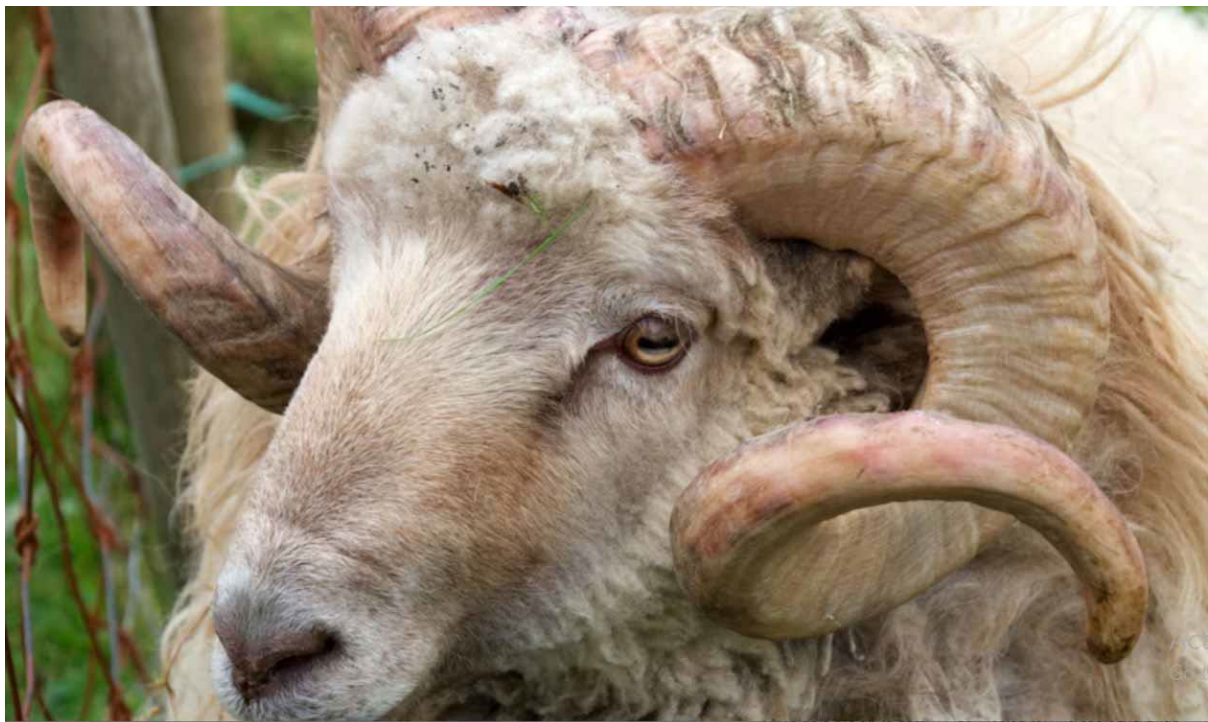


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After I'd admired the livestock, I walked back across the mashed grass. As I did so, I spotted her in the main tent, gossiping with her cronies. Was it the way she stood? Or how she smiled? I can't explain it, but at that moment I knew, for sure, it was time to go. I had the car keys in my pocket and without a word I found our white Range Rover parked in the field opposite. I climbed in and drove out of the gate, leaving my ex-wife to her fate.

That must have been three years ago, maybe four. We don't correspond but mutual friends tell me she's so much happier now. By all accounts, the spinning and weaving business that she set up in what used to be my workshop is thriving. If I'm honest, I sometimes have a twinge of regret. My longed-for freedom is just a tiny bit hollow. I had no idea I had been holding her back or that she was the one who really wanted to me to leave.