

## Speech: A Great Read

*Winner, World Championship of Public Speaking, 2021. A truly remarkable, high-connection speech made more remarkable considering this contest was via Zoom with contestants delivering their speeches to an audience-free, blank screen.*

*A speech by Verity Price  
([www.iamverity.com](http://www.iamverity.com)) (August 28, 2021)*

*Watch it first [on YouTube](#), then read...*

When I was a little girl  
I used to love snuggling on my dad's lap  
When he read me fairy tales.  
Not surprisingly  
I grew up wanting  
The fairy tale-  
To be happily married  
With beautiful kids-  
A gorgeous home-  
And a great career-  
By 30.

I never dreamed  
I would turn 40  
Unmarried  
No children  
And living  
In my sister and brother-in-law's spare room.

For my ego  
This-  
Was a scary-tale.

So I hid  
In the spare room -  
Eating ice-cream  
And binge-watching  
Netflix.

Contest Chair-  
Have you ever noticed  
That at your worst  
You ALWAYS  
Run into someone at their best?  
I had dragged myself to the shop  
Just to get more ice-cream  
Thinking - no one I know  
Is going to be there.  
But there she was.  
That friend!  
You know the one  
Their life - is perfect.  
And - they tell you.

Here I am  
Hand on fridge  
Stuck-  
Having to hear how  
How happily ever after  
She has ended up.  
Oh, you're married with kid,  
*And you're in business*  
*And you bought a new house.*  
*Me? - I'm great -*  
I wanted to die.  
I was a mess!  
My life was a mess!  
The spare room was a mess!

But this was the mess-  
Where I found  
The last letter my dad ever wrote me. (holds up letter)  
Seeing his familiar handwriting  
Just flooded me with grief...  
Verity - your life is a book  
And if you're not enjoying the read  
Write a different story-  
And then watch for a miracle.  
Because I'm watching too.

*I'm fresh out of miracles Dad,  
And how do I write  
A different story about them?  
To prove my point,  
I went to FACEBOOK  
And - you guessed it!  
There were no stories  
Of miserable 40-year-olds  
Living in spare rooms.  
But the letter just lay there  
It was like it was looking at me  
Almost whispering-  
Write- A-Different-Story.*

If anyone could write a different story  
It was my dad-  
He wasn't a glass half-full guy  
He was a 'aren't I lucky  
I've got a glass' guy.  
When Dad was 60  
He lost his job  
We lost our home  
And had to live in a campervan.  
But the story Dad told was-  
We get to live like we're on holiday.

He never complained that he'd gone  
From a corner office  
To selling insurance - door-to-door.  
Instead the story he told was-  
I'm working on my sales skills.  
And the miracle that happened?  
He was salesman of the year  
And he bought us a new home.

Even in our last phone call  
On his way to hospital  
Do you know what he said to me?  
Don't worry, V-  
You know I love breakfast in bed!

Shame - hit me - like a bus!  
My whole life  
Dad had been showing me  
How to write a different story.  
So - I picked up my pen  
I looked at 'that' friend  
And I thought -  
40 is going to be my best chapter.  
I looked at the spare room  
And thought-  
This is my safe place to start over.  
I looked at my love life  
And do you know what I thought?  
I have got to stop- kissing frogs!

When I wrote a different story  
My life began to change.  
I went from feeling shameful-  
To feeling grateful.  
And for the first time  
I stopped worrying  
About where I wasn't -  
And started enjoying  
Where I was!

And the miracle that happened?  
Within 6 months-  
I'd moved into a new cottage -  
Much to my sister's relief.  
Within a year-  
I'd kissed a prince -  
Much to my relief.  
At 44-  
I had a baby boy -  
Much to my doctor's DISBELIEF.

This letter  
Catapulted me into discovering  
That it doesn't matter-  
Who you are-  
Where you are-  
What chapter of your life you are in-  
Something as simple  
As choosing to write a different story  
Can make difficult circumstances  
A lot easier to deal with.

Now I think you'll agree with me  
That the last two years  
Have been a rough read for us all  
But we've also written different stories  
Ones where-  
Neighbours get to serenade each other-  
Businesses get to pivot and innovate  
And my all-time favourite-  
That time when we all waved our wands  
And - Bibbidi-Bobbidi-Boo  
Your world - turned into an auditorium  
And mine - an international stage!

My fellow story-tellers  
Do you know what I've learned?  
Fairy tales  
Are great to read - to my son.

Real life  
Is full of detours, delays-  
And things that go wrong.  
But - as my dad said -  
Life is a book  
Then everyday  
You get to decide  
If your story being written is  
For you - or by you.

When my dad reminded me  
I was the author of my life  
My life changed.  
So -  
If you're looking for a change  
Or want a new chapter  
Or just fancy a miracle  
Pick up your pen  
And write a different story.

Trust me!  
It's going to make  
For a GREAT read!

Contest Chair!

*816 words*

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*Brian Woolf's comments: A previous WCPS, Morgan McArthur, observed "The more personal the speech, the more universal it's reach." Verity's speech is very personal-it's about herself, her disappointments and failures, and her father who helps her see things differently. And there's even an acquaintance who is a pain (we usually have one of those, too.) The speech reached us all. We immediately related to baby Verity snuggling in her dad's lap, and then to the ups and downs, experiences and influences, in her life: the spare room, "that" friend, her life's a mess, dad's last letter, Facebook,*

*"breakfast in bed," being shown how to write a different story, stopping kissing frogs, and, finally - it doesn't matter who or where you are, you can always write yourself another story. Verity stepped through our Zoom screen and took us, completely absorbed, through this fascinating, relatable journey, painting her story from her palate of speaking tools: triples, twists, rhyme, personification, humor, contrast, threading, repetition, emotion, despair and hope, agreement questions, and her constant audience connection throughout. This highly visual, inspirational speech of hope is a kaleidoscope of vividly painted, relatable, memorable images that support Verity's valuable message: it is a speech that will be enjoyed and studied by many in many countries.*

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