

Passive Voice in Short Stories: Analytical Study

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Abstract

A short story is a work of fiction. A prose narrative of shorter length than the novel, and it usually concentrates on a single theme. Many writers prefer writing short stories when they want to present a single significant episode or scene involving a limited number of characters.

Writers differ in their style, but they agree on certain basic elements in writing the short story. Readers also differ in their preference; some might prefer crime short stories, others like fantasy ones, while many are obsessed by romance or mystery short stories.

The way in which the writers present their short stories is restricted to each writer's point of view and the angle from which he wants to show his opinion and makes it apprehensive for his readers. So different parts of speech are involved in writing short stories, and different structures are used, but the focus of this paper is on the use of passive voice in short stories. Do writers prefer or prefer not to use the passive voice in their writings, and if they do prefer using it, will this affect the phrasing of the short story in a way that ties up the process of comprehension in the mind of the reader? This paper tries to answer this question, depending on the analysis of four short stories, chosen from different types for different writers.

1. Introduction

The current paper has been conducted for two purposes. The first purpose is to study the short story, its definitions, structure, characteristics, and how it is written by different writers, while the second purpose is to explore the passive voice, its definition, structure, and uses, in addition to general remarks, which were written about the passive voice. All this is a preliminary for the major aim of this study. After presenting the short story and the passive voice, an analysis is undertaken to show whether those short story writers do use the passive voice or not.

A selection has been made for different short stories. Each story comes from a certain category such as mystery, crime, fantasy, romance, or general short stories. A short story will be presented, followed by an analysis, talking about the use of passive voice in it. Four short stories were chosen for different authors in order to be as specific as possible considering the way in which they write their stories in regard to the use of the passive voice.

Hopefully, this research project will present an interesting finding after the analysis of the short stories, and provide an answer to the popped question mentioned earlier: Do writers of the short story use the passive in their writings? Or not?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Passive Voice

2.1.1 Passive Voice: Definition

Leech (2006, p. 80), defines passive voice as “A type of verb construction in which a form of *be* is followed by the *-ed* form (past participle) of the main verb, for example, *is loved, was beaten, will be sent*. Hence, a passive clause or sentence is one in which the verb phrase is passive”.

According to Woods (2006, p. 247), passive voice is when the subject receives the action, and active voice is when the subject does the action. The same definition is presented by Olsen (2006), as she defines the passive as a sentence in which the subject receives the action of the verb.

This means that in the passive voice, the grammatical subject receives the action: something is done to the grammatical subject. So we use the passive voice when we want to focus on the object of the verb in an active sentence rather than the subject.

Gucker (1996, p. 93), says that the passive voice is the form of the verb that tells what is done to the subject rather than what the subject does.

In his book (The Online English Grammar), Hughes (2001), mentions that the passive voice is used to show interest in the person or object that experiences an action rather than the person or object that performs the action.

Davidson & Alcock (1889), define the passive voice as the form of a verb in which the subject denotes the person or thing acted upon. The same meaning comes from Rozakis (2003), who says that a verb is passive when its action is performed upon the subject.

Swick (2010), says “A sentence in the active voice that has a transitive verb can be changed to the passive voice, but the function of the elements of the active sentence are different from their function in the passive sentence”.

All the reviewed definitions above agree on the same definition of the passive voice, but each writer expresses it in different words.

2.1.2 Passive Voice: Structure

According to Galasso (2002), the passive voice rule is:

[Be + Verb + Past Participle + By]

Leech (2006), mentions that the passive reverses the normal relation between the ‘doer’ and the ‘done to’. So forming the passive voice is not difficult. You use the verb ‘to be’ in the correct tense and add the past participle of the main verb.

Hughes (2001), agrees with this rule and he cites the following examples of the passive:

Simple present:

The house is cleaned every day.

Present continuous:

The house is being cleaned at the moment.

Simple past:

The house was cleaned yesterday.

Past continuous:

The house was being cleaned last week.

Present perfect:

The house has been cleaned since you left.

Past perfect:

The house had been cleaned before their arrival.

Future:

The house will be cleaned next week.

Future continuous:

The house will be being cleaned tomorrow.

Present conditional:

The house would be cleaned if they had visitors.

Past conditional:

The house would have been cleaned if it had been dirty.

The active voice sentence follows the sentence order of subject, verb, object. The subject performs the action; the verb expresses the action; the object receives the action. The flow of the sentence is forward, moving from the subject to the object, while the passive voice sentence flip flops the subject and object. Now the subject is the passive recipient of the action. The agent performing the action in this sentence is expressed in the preposition phrase (by the...).

Johnson (1991), says that if a sentence in the active voice has both an indirect object and a direct object, either the direct object or the indirect object can become the subject of the equivalent passive sentence. Also, he mentions that a passive verb must be a transitive verb, that is, one that has an object when it is in the active voice, because if it had no object in the active voice, there would be nothing to become its subject in the passive voice, and a verb must have a subject.

You can recognize passive voice expressions because the verb phrase will always include a form of *be*, such as *am*, *is*, *was*, *were*, *are*, or *been*. The presence of a *be* verb, however, does not necessarily mean that the sentence is in passive voice. Another way to recognize passive voice sentences is that they

may include a 'by the...' phrase after the verb; the agent performing the action, if named, is the object of the preposition in this phrase.

The passive provides a means of avoiding an awkward change of subject in the middle of the sentence. So the active sentence is constructed according to basic English subject-verb-object sentence structure, where the emphasis is placed on the subject or doer of the action, whereas the passive reverses the order and places the emphasis on the recipient of the action. For example:

Active: The manager wrote the report.

Passive: The report was written by the manager.

Altenberg & Vago (2010, p. 239), discuss each of the characteristics of passive sentences:

First, the subject (doer of the action) follows the verb.

Second, the word *by* precedes the subject.

Third, the noun phrase that follows the verb in the active sentence occurs before the verb in the passive sentence.

Fourth, passive sentences have a form of *be* (*am, is, are, was, were, be, being*) before the verb.

And fifth, the main verb following the passive *be* is in a special form. You may recognize this special form of the verb as the past participle form of the verb.

The important thing to keep in mind is that in a sentence it is always the noun phrase before the verb, whether or not it is doing the action, which controls the form of the verb.

If you want to change an active voice sentence to passive voice, consider carefully who or what is performing the action expressed in the verb, and then make that agent the object of a 'by the ...' phrase. Make what is acted upon the subject of the sentence, and change the verb to a form of *be* + past participle. Including an explicit 'by the...' phrase is optional.

Or we can simplify this transformation in a three step process:

1. Move the object of the active sentence to subject position in the passive sentence.
2. Change the verb to passive form (two parts).
3. Move the subject of the active sentence to object position preceded by the preposition *by* (optional).

Hughes (2001), also mentions that (Get/Have Something Done) is passive in meaning. It may describe situations where we want someone else to do something for us.

Examples:

- a. I must **get / have my hair cut**.
- b. When are you going to **get that window mended**?
- c. We're **having the house painted**.

If the verb refers to something negative or unwanted, it has the same meaning as a passive sentence:

d. Jim **had his car stolen** last night. (= Jim's car was stolen)

e. They **had their roof blown off** in the storm. (= Their roof was blown off in the storm)

The construction can refer to the completion of an activity, especially if a time expression is used:

f. We'll **get the work done** as soon as possible.

g. I'll **get those letters typed** before lunchtime.

In all these sentences, we are more interested in the **result** of the activity than in the person or object that performs the activity.

2.1.3 Uses of Active and Passive Voice

A sentence in the active voice means the same as a sentence in the passive voice if the object of the active sentence is made the subject of the passive sentence and the subject of the active sentence is replaced by a prepositional phrase with *by*.

Johnson (1991), says that the use of the active voice requires naming the agent of the verb, because in the active voice the agent and the subject are the same, and a verb must have a subject. The passive voice permits not naming the agent of the verb, because the object of the active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb. If the agent is too obvious, too unimportant, or too vague to mention, the passive is usually better.

We use the active voice when the actor's identity is important and when we want to be direct and emphatic, while we use the passive voice when we do not need to tell the reader who is acting.

In most nonscientific writing situations, active voice is preferable to passive for the majority of your sentences. Sometimes the use of passive voice can create awkward sentences. Also, overuse of passive voice throughout an essay can cause your prose to seem flat and uninteresting.

In scientific writing, however, passive voice is more readily accepted since using it allows one to write without using personal pronouns or the names of particular researchers as the subjects of sentences. So we use the objective passive for writing in disciplines such as the sciences. So if the doer of the action of an active sentence is a vague pronoun or noun, the doer of the action can be omitted from the passive form of the sentence.

In his book (*Steps to Writing Well*), Wyrick (2010), remarks that although conventions vary among disciplines, your prose style will improve if you choose strong, active voice verbs over wordy or unclear passive constructions.

Jacone (2003), states that the passive voice is best used when:

- You want the reader to focus on an activity or occurrence rather than who or what caused it to happen.
- The doer is unknown.
- You don't want to assign blame.
- A process is described.

Rozakis (2003), recommends using the active voice whenever possible because it is more direct and forceful. Using the active voice makes your writing crisp and powerful. The active verb is one word rather than two. Further, there is no need for a prepositional phrase beginning with 'by' if you use the active voice. He also says that using the passive voice is preferable over the active voice under two conditions:

- You don't want to assign blame.
- You don't know who did the action.

Thus, the passive voice is used to put the emphasis on the person or the thing which is affected by an action. It is used in sentences where the object of the action is more important than the people who perform the action.

Woods (2001), says that unless you are trying to hide something or unless you truly don't know the facts, you should make your writing as specific as possible. Specific reside in active voice. Active voice is better than passive voice because active voice uses fewer words to say the same thing.

Johnson (1991), agrees that the passive voice is wordier than the active voice, and he adds that it is often comparatively clumsy. When it is used excessively, it makes expression seem vague and evasive.

Eggenchwiler & Biggs (2001), give their opinion concerning the use of the active and passive voice. They say use the active voice whenever you can; it conveys more energy than the passive voice and also results in more concise writing, and use the passive voice, however, when you don't know the actor, when you don't want to name the actor, or when you want to emphasize the person or thing acted upon rather than the actor. The passive voice is often appropriate in scientific writing.

Albert (2000), states that the disadvantages of the passive voice are that it is longer and less vigorous, and can be harder to understand, particularly when the sentences start to get longer. He recommends using the passive voice in these situations:

- If most of the articles in your target publication still use it.
- In abstracts.
- If you want to avoid responsibility.
- If you are writing minutes.
- In the first sentence of a piece of writing.

Otherwise use the active voice, which is particularly useful in the following situations:

- When you need to get a clear message across quickly.
- When you are asking for a decision.
- When you are writing a covering letter to an editor.
- When you are writing for a newspaper and a magazine.

To sum up the uses of the active and passive voice we say that active voice:

- Involves fewer words and is more direct.
- Clearly states the relationship between subject and action.
- Focuses the reader's attention on the agent performing the action.
- Propels the action forward through the sentence and onto the next.

And we use the passive voice when:

- The agent performing the action is unimportant.
- The agent performing the action is unknown.
- The agent performing the action is common knowledge.
- The writer desires to control the focus of the sentence.

While active voice helps to create clear and direct sentences, sometimes writers find that using an indirect operation is rhetorically effective in a given situation, so they choose passive voice. Also, writers in the sciences conventionally use passive voice more often than writers in other discourses. Passive voice makes sense when the agent performing the action is obvious, unimportant, or unknown or when a writer wishes to postpone mentioning the agent until the last part of the sentence or to avoid mentioning the agent at all. The passive voice is effective in such circumstances because it highlights the action and what is acted upon rather than the agent performing the action.

2.1.4 General Points about Passive Voice

Batko (2004), states that the voice of a verb tells something about the relationship between the action of the verb and the subject of the sentence, the person or thing the sentence is about. The active voice is used to show that the subject is doing the acting. The passive voice is used to show that the subject is on the receiving end of the action. She also says that overuse of the passive lards sentences with empty words. Lovinger (2000), says that too much passive can get dull. Scientists load their writing with it. If you read research papers, you can get the idea that scientists never do anything. Somehow everything is *done*, as though by magic. While King (2002), states that unsure writers also feel the passive voice somehow lends their work authority, perhaps even a quality of majesty. With the passive voice the writer usually expresses fear of not being taken seriously.

Rayevska (1976), mentioned that passive voice is regarded as a word order device for giving emphasis to what would normally be inner or outer complements.

Johnson (1991, p. 64), says “when we use the passive we feel we’re breaking a rule. We are not. The passive voice is respectable, is capable of expressing thoughts and shades of meaning that the active voice cannot express, and is even sometimes more compact and direct than the active voice”.

Jacone (2003), remarks that poor passive voice is so often maligned by writing instructors. The truth is that there is nothing wrong with passive voice. Rather, it is a question of when and how to use it. Both active and passive voice sentences are grammatically correct. It is a question of which one is most appropriate to the purpose and tone of your message.

Rozakis (2003), Woods (2006), and Galko (2001), state that in general, use the active voice instead of the passive voice.

2.2 Short Story

2.2.1 Short Story: Definition

Depending on Wikipedia, a short story is a brief work of literature, usually written in narrative prose. A classic definition of a short story is that one should be able to read it in one sitting. So a short story is a work of fiction that is usually written in prose, often in narrative format.

It usually deals with few characters and often concentrates on the creation of the mood rather than the plot. It is a form of narrative prose writing that is characterized by the number of words contained therein, usually under 10,000 words.

Atwell (2002), stated that short stories tend to be less complex than novels. Mostly, a short story will focus on only one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a limited number of characters, and covers a short period of time. Short stories do not contain an overabundance of characters or deviations from a central plot or theme, as a novel might. Yet, unlike flash fiction, they give readers something focused to think about, rather than a simple act to interpret.

As with longer stories, plots of short stories also have a climax, crisis, or turning point. However, the endings of many short stories are abrupt and open and may or may not have a moral or practical lesson. Since the short story format includes a wide range of genres and styles, the actual length is determined by the individual author’s preference. And it is often judged by its ability to provide a complete or satisfying treatment of its characters and subject.

2.2.2 Short Story: Structure

Atwell (2002), cites certain steps for the structure of the short story to follow when writing a short story:

- One should create a narrative lead by showing the main character in action, dialogue, or reaction.
- Introduce the main character's character.
- Introduce the setting: the time, place, and relationships of the main character's life.
- Introduce and develop the problem the main character is facing.
- Develop the plot and problem toward a climax, for example: a decision, action, conversation, or confrontation, or confrontation that shows the problem at its height.
- Develop a change in the main character, for example: an acknowledgment of understanding of something, a decision, a course of action, a regret.
- Develop a resolution, i.e., how does the main character come to terms, or not, with his or her problem.

2.2.3 *Characteristics of Short Story*

Certain features of course make the short story significant and unique. Writers choose specific patterns to follow when writing their short stories, and these patterns give certain characteristics or elements to the short story. Atwell (2002), mentions a pattern to be followed in the longer forms of fiction, like stories, which tend to contain core elements of dramatic structure: exposition (the introduction of setting, situation and main characters); complication (the event of the story that introduces the conflict); rising crisis (the decisive moment for the protagonist and their commitment to a course of action); climax (the point of highest interest in terms of the conflict and the point of the story with the most action); resolution (the point of the story when the conflict is resolved); and moral. But because short stories are not that long, so they may or may not follow this pattern.

Some short stories do not follow patterns at all. Of course, as with any art form, the exact characteristics of a short story will vary by author.

2.2.4 *How to Write a Short Story*

Short stories are not easy to write, and writers differ in their style. But some points if taken into consideration, they might help in writing a short story:

- Collect ideas for your story.
- Begin with basics of a short story (introduction, initiating action, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution).
- Find inspiration from real people.
- Know your characters.
- Limit the breadth of your story.
- Decide who will tell the story.
- Organize your thoughts.
- Start writing.

- Keep writing.
- Let the story write itself.

3. Research Methodology

In order to answer the question of this research paper, four different short stories were chosen to be read and analyzed to see if their texts contain the use of passive voice or not. The four short stories are written by different authors.

3.1 Short Story: Mystery: The Face in the Window

Written by: Matthew Spence

They called her the face in the window. Practically everybody in the neighborhood knew her-the woman who would sit in the upstairs window of her house, looking out into space, oblivious to the world. Some people said she'd gone crazy after her husband had left her, others said that she'd lost a son or a daughter. The truth was, nobody really knew for sure. She was just known as the Face Woman, because her expression was always blank, like a mask.

Jim Heller knew that she had a different name, one that she no longer used, that had been lost to the world. He was the one who brought her food, and took care of the rent. Part of the money came from her social security; he assumed the rest came from an inheritance, or from an insurance policy she had stashed somewhere. She was always dressed in the same simple clothing, although not always the same clothes, so he knew that she didn't have to spend all of her time in the wheelchair that she used to watch the world outside her window.

"So, how are you today?" Jim asked one Friday afternoon as he stopped by on another one of his monthly rounds. Looking at the window, he added, "The weather's nicer today, isn't it? I'll bet you're glad that storm is over with."

She didn't answer as Jim gathered up the envelopes on her kitchen table. Her face was impassive as always, although he thought he saw a flicker of recognition in her eyes. "Well, I'll just take care of these, then. See you next month, okay?"

When he was gone, she continued to sit in her wheelchair, looking out her window at the houses beyond. She knew there was a world out there that she was no longer a part of, a world of noise and people-people who brought danger, and did bad things to each other. In her withdrawn silence, she'd wanted no part of that world for years, and tried not to think about what had made her that way. Long ago, when Jim Heller had been a little boy and she had been the same age then that he was now, she had been different. The world had been different, too, and it had been part of the life she shared with her husband, who'd been her connection to it. It was when the bad thing happened to him that the connection had been severed.

“I need to go out of town for a few days,” he’d said on the last day they’d spent together. “It’s just a short business trip. I should be back Sunday night.”

“Another one?” She sighed. “I was hoping we could go out for dinner this weekend.”

“I know, but the company has been having some problems with one of their suppliers, and as usual I have to go there and straighten things out. I’m sure it’s no big deal-I’ll be back in no time.”

“Well-I guess I’ll see you when you get home, then.” Except that she never did...

The police brought her the news two days later. It didn’t sink in right away, and when it did she thought at first that they must have made some sort of a mistake. He was on his way home, she was sure of it. All she had to do was wait...

She’d kept up a facade for a while, of course. Just to keep up appearances, for her family and friends. But the connection she’d had with their world was already gone. It was gone when they took her to identify the body they’d found; when they told her about the young man with dead eyes whom they’d arrested for his death. And it was gone when she went to his funeral, and in the long, silent years that followed, as she watched the cars and her neighbors outside change.

Or, at least she thought it was.

Then came one cool night when the moon was full, and it was so light that she could see the narrow street in its entirety. She saw two figures that she knew didn’t belong there following Jim Heller as he headed up the street. She wasn’t sure why he was there-it wasn’t his normal visiting day, and at any rate he wouldn’t have come at this hour of the night. But he was there, and he seemed to know the figures that were following him, because he turned to confront them. She couldn’t hear what they were saying, but the discussion seemed tense. Then the tension mercifully faded as they walked away. Jim watched them go, and turned to leave.

Something stirred inside of her as she watched. At first she’d told herself that she wouldn’t get involved, that she wasn’t part of that world anymore. Ignore them and forget, she told herself. Except that she couldn’t, because she saw the two figures again. They were walking up the street, following where Jim had gone...

She had a cell phone, one that Jim had given her in case of emergencies. She’d never used it, but she kept it on the kitchen table where she kept her mail. She was out of practice; it took some effort for her to remember how to dial 9-1-1. But she did, and when the voice on the other end answered, she knew what to say, and how to say it.

It was her connection to the world, after all.

3.1.1 Analysis

Two sentences which contain the use of passive voice were found in this short story:

1. It *was gone* when they took her to identify the body they had found.
2. And it *was gone* when she went to his funeral.

3.2 Short Story: Fantasy: Scorned

Written by: Paul Magnan

I grasped the rough edges of the tombstone and pulled it from the strands of thick, yellowed grass upon which it lay. I set it in an upright position. The words "Dear Love" were carved along the top of the stone. I had carved those words.

For a few seconds the stone stayed in place. This time she will accept my apology. Everything is going to be fine.

The stone wobbled and threw itself to the earth.

"What do I have to say?" I cried. "I'm sorry! You know I am!"

The tombstone lay silent on the dead grass.

"That girl meant nothing to me. She was nothing but a horrible mistake, a moment of weakness. It was just that one time! Didn't I apologize? Didn't I try to make it up to you? Why did you have to leave?"

My words bounced off the cold stone.

Tears ran down my face, following well-worn tracks as once again I relived that terrible day:

The first thing I saw was one of her white sneakers, lying sideways on the floor. I took another step down and saw her feet hanging in space, with the other sneaker still on her right foot. Her face was purple and bloated. Her eyes, though dull, damned me as I cut the rope. I tried to carry her up the stairs, but her body threw itself out of my arms. Finally I dragged her up by her feet. Her head bounced on each stair as her eyes watched me, accused me...

I sobbed, and couldn't stop. The stone lay there, disdainful of my pain.

I brought myself under control. "Didn't I then prove my love to you? Didn't I show how much you meant to me by burying you here, all by myself? I broke the law by not reporting what happened. I couldn't bear the thought of you lying in a cold morgue. Doesn't that mean anything to you?"

The sun was setting behind me. My shadow crept up to the tombstone and caught the edge of it. It rasped against the grass as it skittered up several inches to escape the contact.

I wailed and threw myself to the earth where.

My love was buried. The ground heaved and threw me to the side. Rocks dislodged themselves from the soil and flew at me, driving me back.

I walked away, tattered and disconsolate. But tomorrow I'll be back. Tomorrow I'll once again reset the tombstone. And this time it will remain upright. My love will forgive me. I know she will.

3.2.1 Analysis

The writer here used the passive in two places:

1. The words "Dear Love" *were carved* along the top of the stone.

But the narrator immediately stated after this sentence that he is the one who carved those words:

I had carved those words

Which means the ambiguity did not last long.

2. I walked and threw myself to the earth where my love *was buried*.

Before writing this sentence, he mentioned earlier in the story that he is the one who buried her.

So the writer uses the passive voice in this story, but he mentions the doer of the action in other sentences. The story is about one page long, and only in these two places the author of this short story used the passive voice. We can say that the use of passive voice here is kind of limited.

3.3 Short Story: General: Patience

Written by: Catina Noble

My name is Abby. I live in Patience, a town with the population of three hundred. I am 37, single and bitter about my ex who got married last month, even though I dumped him. All I ever was to get married and have a child of my own. Okay I will be honest, I want the baby. I am just not sure I am the marrying type. Can anyone ever really say they truly know someone? I cannot take that chance, I refuse to. So after three years of him waiting, I let him go.

I try to erase the pretty wedding photo I saw in the newspaper. This image refuses to even take a coffee break. I cannot seem to focus lately. "Abby, will there be anything else today?" I shake out of my misery and say "No thanks Mr. Lipperman, have a good day". I put my mail in my purse and walk out of the town's post office.

I kick the snow off my boots and unlock my front door. I chuck the mail on the kitchen table. I have not eaten a single meal at the table since my dad Mark passed away. He died of a heart attack while taking his daily stroll. He has been gone a year yesterday. The thought of both my parents dead and me as an only child does not improve my mood. I toss in a lasagna. I tap my fingers impatiently as I wait for the microwave to beep and let me know my gourmet meal is now ready to consume.

I am cozy and content in my flashy pink flannel cupcake pajamas. As weird as it sounds, I believe everyone should collect something. My obsession just happens to be flannel pajamas. I pull my home made quilt over my head and

try to relax. Loneliness creeps up on my body like a blanket of lead. I drift off into a fragmented sleep.

At six in the morning I get up, pour a cup of tea and then a strange noise. It cannot be the door. I mean who could it possibly be? Visitors are rare for me. Knock, knock. I hear the noise again and can no longer deny the fact that someone is at my door. My obsession with flannel pj's is about to get the better of me. I mean what do I say to the person knocking on the door, "could you please hold on a moment while I change into something less childish?" I walk slowly to the door. My mind is a blur. I am totally caught off guard. I open the door.

"I need help" says the troubled looking female with a protruding belly. She is not dressed very warm for the weather and looks lost. "What do you want help with?" I ask. I try to be polite and not sound annoyed as I actually feel. She shivers and looks like she might collapse. I am speechless. For a moment we both just stand there and stare into each other's eyes. "I am freezing. Can I please come in and warm up?" she asks in a low voice. What the hell am I supposed to do? Suppose she collapses on my front door for the whole town to see? This is the negative aspect of being the first house visible when you come into town. "Ah, I guess, for a bit. Just until you warm up". I raise my eyebrows as she enters my house.

I cannot help but stare at Sapphire. She tells me that is her name, for real. She is huge. She looks like she is due any minute. "Everyone calls me Sap for short and I have two weeks until the baby is due". She says softly as she meets me eyes. I cannot help myself. The whole situation is unbelievable. Sap is seventeen. She has no parents and has walked five miles to my town, Patience. She just kept walking and walking until she could not walk anymore. That was when she knocked on my door. I do not want to scare her away. Although I am out of my element, I find that I enjoy her company.

I cannot help myself and ask Sap what she is running away from. "I am running away from my foster parents. There were nice enough when they were collecting money for me staying with them. Then the money stopped coming. They had another fight and I just could not take it anymore. Both were drunk and throwing things at each other. I barely missed getting knocked out by a glass ashtray. I will not go back, no matter what. I have no place to". Sap looks up at me with tears in her eyes.

I fix up the guest bedroom for her. I have no choice. Sap needs somewhere to stay. The system does not seem concerned with her because she is older than sixteen. I called the foster parents house. They kept hanging up on me. Sapphire probably feels as lonely as I do each night. I just cannot send her out in the world alone. I have life experience and struggle with loneliness. I

cannot imagine being in her position. It breaks my heart. That is it, I have made up my mind. Sap will stay with me.

I feel good. I feel like that for once I am doing something in my life. When my father passed away I decided to give up my full time job as a parole officer and take two years off. Two years off to figure out what was going on in my life and how I could change it before it was too late. Up until Sapphire, I had felt like life was passing me by. Now I have energy and feel alive. I have not felt this good since, I cannot even remember. This feels right.

I am in my bed. For once, I do not feel lonely. I feel good. I smile and then my heart skips a beat as I hear Sap calling my name. I get up quickly and run into the guest bedroom. Sap does not look well at all. She is all curled up in bed and is breathing heavy. I am overwhelmed and not sure what to do. I ask stupidly, "What's wrong?" She screams "I think I am having the baby!" I stare at her in disbelief. What am I going to do? I shake my head to try and clear it so something intelligent will come to me. I wait and say nothing. It is Sapphire who draws me near to the bed and whispers "you have to drive me to the hospital now". I nod my head slowly.

It takes Sapphire and me a half hour to drive to the hospital. I drive as quickly as I can. I am overwhelmed with emotion. I admire her. I would give anything to be in her place at the moment. She seems so brave, even in pain. She squeezes my hand during labour. I think my hand might be broken. I still admire her and feel alive.

As the baby's head comes out full of dark matted hair, it is I who squeals with joy. I stare at Sap. She stares at the baby like she is lost in a dream. The baby is a boy and weighs in at an even six pounds. I ask Sap what she is going to name him. She holds the baby close to her and looks nothing but comfortable. She whispers "Mark". I am dumfounded and cannot believe it. I ask quietly "What is his name?" Sap smiles at me and says, "Mark, I have always loved that name". I am not sure what to say to her at the moment. My father's name was Mark but I had never told her. She hardly knew a thing about me. This is my sign, my life and a new beginning.

3.3.1 Analysis

Only one use of the passive voice is cited here in this sentence:

- I think my hand might *be broken*.

It is obvious who might broke her arm, it is Sapphire, who was holding her hand while she was in labour.

3.4 Short Story: Crime: Last to Go

Written by: George Ebey

Keith Kellerman entered his brother's house, quietly, searching for the corpse. He found it in the front parlor. His brother, Robert, was sitting slumped

over in his favorite chair. It was evening, dark now, and Kellerman hadn't bothered to switch on any lights. The room was in shadows, yet Kellerman recognized Robert's outline perfectly. That was his older brother there, slumped over, dead. Robert was an old man, seventy-nine years old, yet he'd been healthy before this. Kellerman wasn't far behind his brother in age: himself seventy-five, yet now it looked as if he'd be the last. Moving closer, he knelt down next Robert. He felt for a pulse. Nothing. He felt for a breath. Nothing. Yes, Robert was truly gone.

Kellerman grinned.

Over the years, the great many years that made up their lifetimes, Kellerman had grown to despise his older brother. For as long as he could remember, Robert had been the stand out. Robert was always the smartest. Robert was always the fastest. Robert got whatever he wanted, while Kellerman lived in obscurity, forever in second place. It was Robert who was sent to the best schools. It was Robert who gained success as a wealthy industrialist, while little Keith Kellerman had to tag along on his brother's heels, contending himself with being his brother's servant. He'd done just that, spending the best years of his life serving his wealthy older brother, constantly playing second fiddle and hating every moment of it.

Kellerman had sworn that he would someday live to see his brother buried. Then two months ago, he'd gotten the word from his doctor that he had cancer. Cancer! Sure enough, Robert, though older, was still in perfect health. All his life, Kellerman had lived for the day when his older brother would be dead, and gone, and he'd be the only one left. Now it seemed as if Robert was also going to enjoy the privilege of being the last to go. Kellerman couldn't allow that. Somehow, Robert would have to die first.

Kellerman had been extremely careful in sorting out the details. After all, he didn't wish to spend his final days, his only days without Robert, under incarceration for murder. Ironically, it was Robert's way of life that showed Kellerman the way.

Robert didn't get to the top of the business world without learning how to eliminate some of the competition along the way. Whenever a rival businessman would try to muscle in on Robert's territory, Robert would have them killed. During these occasions, Keith Kellerman always had a hand in helping his brother set it up. Over the years, he'd learned to be somewhat of an expert in setting up contract hits. He knew just the right people to contact, who was safe and who wasn't. For Kellerman, the task of choosing and hiring the proper assassin for the proper job was an easy one. No matter where you go, you can always find the proper killer for the proper price.

Over the years, it was amazing to Kellerman just how many decent people with good paying professional jobs also moonlighted as murderers. Those were

the people he looked for, people with double lives who wouldn't risk jeopardizing their primary careers by doing a shoddy job of murder.

That's the kind of person that Kellerman had solicited to assassinate his brother.

As he could see, the killer had followed his directions quiet well. Kellerman didn't want his brother's death to be messy or particularly violent. He wanted it to be clean, and as far as he could tell, it was. Looking over Robert again, he didn't see any blood or any other signs of a struggle. The killer had been quick and professional.

That was good. Despite his confidence in this field, Kellerman was always nervous during the moments before an assassination was made. He couldn't help but be apprehensive, worrying that something might go wrong. It wasn't until the deed was done that he could relax, that he could be sure that things went according to plan. He felt this way because he never actually got to meet the killer in person. All transactions were done through correspondence in order to further distance himself from the crime. So far, this policy had served Kellerman well.

The killer was told to come to Robert's house at exactly eleven o'clock that night. He was given Robert's description: an old man with bright gray hair, dark eyes; he always carried a gold pocket watch with him, even at night.

The pocket watch. Robert never went anywhere without it. He even took it to bed with him. Searching through his brother's pockets, Kellerman found it, and took it. The pocket watch had belonged to their grandfather. It was an antique, a priceless heirloom. Grandfather had giving it to Robert shortly before he died so many years ago. Kellerman had always been bitter about that. Why did Robert always get everything? Throughout his life, Robert had cherished that watch. He kept it with him constantly, for good luck, and good luck was all he'd ever had.

Kellerman had always seen that watch as a symbol of success. Now it was his. Holding in his hands, he looked it over with great satisfaction. He checked the time, just a little after eleven o'clock. Robert had kept it in working order all these years. Satisfied, he placed it in his pocket. It's mine now. Mine. Just then, the front door bell rang. Jolted, Kellerman swung towards it. Someone's here, probably a neighbor or a servant coming to check up on Robert. That's perfect, he decided. Now he could play the part of the distraught brother who just found his older brother dead, which would further illustrate his innocence.

Going to the door, he opened up, not recognizing the man standing at the threshold. He wasn't a servant. A neighbor perhaps.

"Mr. Kellerman?" the man asked.

"Yes. Please come in. I'm afraid something terrible has happened."

Kellerman allowed the man to enter and shut the door.

Turning, he noticed that the man was looking at the watch chain that dangled from his pocket. The man was wearing a pair of leather gloves, and grinning.

Before Kellerman could gasp, the man reached out with his gloved hands and gripped him tightly around the throat. No, he tried to say but couldn't. You've got the wrong man! Struggling, Kellerman tried to shout, to let the man know that Robert was in the other room. Dead. But how? If this is the assassin, how did Robert die?

Kellerman was old. The killer was not. It only took a few seconds for Kellerman to die.

Later afterwards, both Robert and Keith Kellerman were placed side by side in separate storage lockers at the county morgue. The head medical examiner was there along with his assistant, putting the finishing touches on the autopsy reports for both brothers.

It was found that the oldest one, Robert Kellerman, had died naturally of heart failure while reading in his chair. Not a bad way to go. The youngest brother, Keith, had died a much worse way. Affixation. Death by murder.

"Pretty strange," the assistant said. "Two brothers on the same night. One died naturally. The other killed."

"Yeah, it's a weird one," the medical examiner agreed.

"The cops will have a hell of a time figuring this one out."

The medical examiner shrugged. "We'll let them worry about it. Come on, let's get some lunch."

While following him, the assistant asked, "What's that gold chain you have hanging out of your pocket?"

"What, this?" the medical examiner took a gold watch from his pocket. "Here, have a look."

The assistant looked it over and whistled. "That's real gold? Wow."

"Yeah," the medical examiner said. "It's an heirloom." Compliments of my night job, he thought but didn't say.

3.4.1 Analysis

The passive voice was used in six sentences in this short story:

- Kellerman was always nervous during the moments before an assassination *was made*.
- The killer *was told* to come to Robert's house.
- He *was given* Robert's description.
- Both Robert and Keith Kellerman *were placed* side by side in separate storage lockers at the county morgue.
- It *was found* that the oldest one, Robert Kellerman, had died naturally.

4. Findings

After reading and analysing the four different short stories, which were written by different authors, it is clear that all of the four authors prefer to use the passive voice, but to an extent. All of them avoided the overuse of the passive voice, which means they want to present their stories in an explicit style. No ambiguity was cited. The characters, themes, scenes, all of them were clear.

It is known that most short stories tend to leave the end open, to add an interesting suspense for the readers, but our writers here in the four randomly chosen short stories were determined to state everything in an obvious way, that is why they preferred not to use the passive voice a lot but in only few places. May be because each short story has one important character that the theme of the story is concerned about, this character is almost the subject of all the sentences in the story. So it is now safe to say that writers of short stories do use the passive voice in their writings.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research paper is concerned with the use of the passive voice in the short story. Randomly, four short stories from four different categories, for four different authors were chosen to be analysed in order to fetch or look for any uses of the passive voice in them. But it turned out that in literary fiction, writers don't really prefer using too much passive. Mostly, they state facts, plain themes, one or two characters at most, and above all they seem to favour the active voice, where the subject and object are in their proper places.

To sum up, the use of the passive voice was located in the four samples presented here in his paper, but the writers differ in the degree of their usage of passive voice. Some of them use the passive in one or two sentences per story only, while others tend to use it more than five times in one short story. Thus, the passive voice is used in the writing of short stories.

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