

Towards an operative definition of creative writing: a preliminary assessment of creativeness in AI and human texts

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Abstract

Nowadays, AI is present in all our activities. This pervasive presence is perceived as a threat by many category of users that their AI counterpart might substitute. While the potential of AI in handling repetitive tasks is clear, the potential of its creativeness is still misunderstood. We believe that understanding this aspect of AI can transform a threat into an opportunity. This paper is a first attempt to provide a measurable definition of creativity. We applied our definition to AI and human-generated texts, proving the viability of the proposed approach. Our preliminary experiments show that human texts are more creative.

1 Introduction

The Oxford Languages dictionary defines creative writing as “*writing, typically fiction or poetry, which displays imagination or invention (often contrasted with academic or journalistic writing)*,” encompassing all forms of writing that engage the dynamics of thought, expressed through genuine artistry. In this context, the writer assumes the role of a “builder” of an alternative, often fictional, reality, intending to convey something meaningful to their readers. Writers improve their creative skills through consistent practice, primarily by writing, refining ideas, reading the work of others and incorporating feedback.

The spread of AI tools for creative writing.

In the recent past, a number of AI-powered tools have emerged to support the writing activity. These range from the handling of technical aspects of the storytelling process, such as grammar and spelling checking (e.g. *Grammarly*¹), translating text (e.g. *Lara*²) or even write a screenplay (e.g. *Sudowrite*³).

¹<https://app.grammarly.com/>

²<https://lara.translated.com/translate>

³<https://www.sudowrite.com/>

These tools rely on modern AI techniques, such as Recurrent Neural Networks (*RNNs*) or Transformers, like GPT (*Generative Pretrained Transformer*). They are capable of examining context in sequence by learning linguistic patterns and how words logically follow one another, in order to: **a)** offering suggestions for terms, synonyms, and antonyms relevant to specific sentences or paragraphs; **b)** assisting with inspiration for character names or other narrative elements; **c)** proposing suitable titles for a book, considering the story, its themes, morals, and plot; **d)** functioning as an *Artificial Beta Reader*, which performs the task of generating narrative suggestions for certain parts of the story based on patterns learned from similar works through machine learning.

Open question: how to evaluate the creative writing of an AI. Despite the indisputable usefulness of AI tools to support the writing activity, a natural question is to assess to what extent AI tools can also generate creative content. It is often the case that artists—writers, in this study—may question how long their contributions will remain distinguishable from those of creative intelligences that are more efficient and faster, such as ChatGPT, for example. Humans are known for incorporating an emotional framework that enriches every creative process, making art, writing, and other forms of expression unique and deeply connected to their life experiences; and yet, it may really seem that ChatGPT has a suite of tools to support writers that actually does not support writers at all, but rather that it reduces, trivializes and minimizes the effectiveness of a creative text, even potentially replacing the authors⁴. So, the question is: how can we measure the level of creativity of the machine and compare it with that of humans?

⁴<https://leonfurze.com/2024/11/21/openai-is-coming-for-writers/>

Contribution of the paper. We propose an initial operational definition of creativity based on the framework provided by (Runco, 2023), and we conduct preliminary experiments to quantitatively assess the creativity of AI compared to that of humans. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt to provide a practical definition of creativity in this context that can be fully automatized.

2 Related work

There is an active line of research, as well on-line services ⁵, aiming at using AI to classify AI-generated text to fight the risk connected to improper use of such technology such as misinformation, bias, intellectual property concerns and loss of human connection. In (Uchendu et al., 2020) the authors study three versions of authorship attribution problem, among which the discrimination of texts written by a human from those written by machines. A recent research report (Weber-Wulff et al., 2023) pointed out that the available detection tools are often inaccurate and unreliable and have a main bias towards classifying the output as human-written rather than detecting AI-generated text.

Buz et al. (Buz et al., 2024) discuss the creative quality in natural language generation. However, in their work creativity is entirely evaluated by humans, thus limiting the applicability of the proposed method.

Mark A. Runco and Garrett J. Jaeger, in (Runco and Jaeger, 2012), offer a definition that Runco revisits in his most recent paper (Runco, 2023), where he argues that "AI can only produce artificial creativity".

*"The standard definition is bipartite: Creativity requires both **originality and effectiveness**. [...] Originality [...] is often labeled novelty, but [...] if something is not unusual, novel, or unique, it is commonplace, mundane, or conventional. It is not original, and therefore not creative. Originality is vital for creativity but is not sufficient. [...] Original things must be effective to be creative. Like originality, effectiveness takes various forms. It may take the form of [...] usefulness, fit, or appropriateness [...] or the form of value.*

This definition allows us to propose a first operative definition of creativity in section 3 which, contrary to prior work, can be algorithmically evaluated.

⁵<https://originality.ai/>

Given that the above definition of creativity does not inherently exclude AI-generated pseudo-creativity, as it meets the standard requirements of originality and effectiveness, Runco explores two possible approaches for humans to protect their genuinely creative potential: **a)** accept that AI is creative (since it adheres to the standard definition); **b)** revise the standard definition to distinguish human creativity from artificial creativity. If the second option were adopted, at least two additional parameters should be incorporated into the definition of creativity: *authenticity* and *intentionality*. Starting with Intentionality, we can refer to its definition: "Character resulting from the active and conscious participation of the will in a given fact." (From the Oxford Languages Dictionary)

Thus, as Runco himself asserts, intentionality is a characteristic inherently tied to human beings, and by extension to human creativity, but not to artificial creativity. In the same way, Authenticity is purely human and (at least for now) beyond the reach of AI to replicate (as Runco himself mentions in his paper). Authenticity arises from accepting one's own self, in a genuine way, without filters or limits (even ethical ones), and it's how humans express themselves when they "create." AI, however, lacks an experiential self to draw from or a history of experiences, which humans inherently possess. Therefore, AI's creations, while elaborately crafted and impressive, remain an amalgamation of pre-existing content, not the result of personal lived experience.

3 Towards an operative definition of creative writing

Our proposal of a measurable definition of creativity relies on the quantitative evaluation of the two constituent ingredients of Runco's definition (Runco, 2023), namely *originality* and *effectiveness*. More formally given a document d_i , we denote by $O(d_i, D)$ a measure of the originality of d_i with respect to a corpus D , and by $E(d_i, A)$ a measure of its effectiveness with respect to an audience A . The creativeness of d_i is defined as follows:

$$C(d_i, D, A) = \alpha O(d_i, D) + (1 - \alpha) E(d_i, A) \quad (1)$$

where $\alpha \in [0, 1]$ is a parameter to weigh the contribution of the two components.

Measuring Originality. Since originality in (Runco, 2023) is strictly related to uniqueness, we propose to evaluate it by a similarity metric (Chen et al., 2009). Specifically, given a document d_i , \vec{d}_i is its embedding (da Costa et al., 2023), namely a vector representation of d_i .

We define the originality of d_i respect to another document d_j through their cosine similarity, namely:

$$O(d_i, d_j) = 1 - \text{Cosine}(\vec{d}_i, \vec{d}_j) = 1 - \frac{\vec{d}_i \cdot \vec{d}_j}{|\vec{d}_i||\vec{d}_j|} \quad (2)$$

As highest is the originality of d_i as much it is dissimilar to d_j . The originality of d_i with respect to a corpus D is the min value of the originality of d_i to all the documents in the corpus, namely:

$$O(d_i, D) = \min_{d_j \in D, d_j \neq d_i} O(d_i, d_j) \quad (3)$$

Measuring Effectiveness. Effectiveness refers to the ability to convey a message or content to the audience A . Being addressed to an audience implicitly requires humans in the loop and, consequently, a quantitative definition is difficult to scale and has to deal with the arbitrariness of human judgments. Our initial proposal to evaluate the ability to convey a message is based on questionnaires administered to A . Specifically, we assume that for each question Q_i in the questionnaire exists a set of answers Ans_i that proves the ability of the text (i.e. d_i) to convey the message or content. We measure the effectiveness as the fraction of the audience answering Ans_i . More precisely:

$$E(d_i, A) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n w_i \sum_{a \in A} \frac{\text{answer of } a \in Ans_i}{|A|} \quad (4)$$

Where the questionnaire contains n questions and $w_i \in [0, 1]$ is used to weight the contribution of each question.

4 Preliminary Experiment

In this section we report on the results of a simple experiment to evaluate the creativity of AI-generated text compared to human-authored text. We do not aim here to drive concluding remarks on the outcome of the experiment, rather we simply show how our definition of creativity can be used in practice.

We gave in input to ChatGPT (model *gpt-4-turbo*⁶, online interface) the following prompt:

⁶<https://platform.openai.com/docs/models>

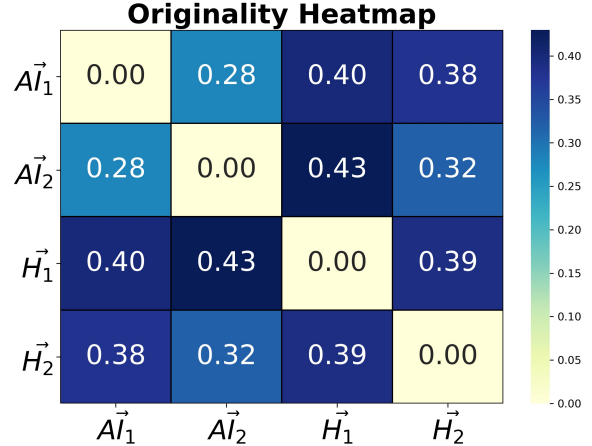


Figure 1: Originality comparison among AI and human (H) generated texts.

$O(AI_1)$	$O(AI_2)$	$O(H_1)$	$O(H_2)$
0.28	0.28	0.39	0.32

Table 1: The originality of the documents in the corpus. Human generated content is more original. We omit D for legibility.

“Write a short *love* story using *J.K. Rowling’s style*”.

The generated texts (AI_1 and AI_2), together with the texts produced by two human writers (H_1 and H_2), answering to the same request from the corpus D and are available in Appendix A. First we removed the stopwords and then we embedded these texts into a 768 dimensional dense vector space using the *all-mpnet-base-v2* sentence-transformer (Face, 2024). The resulting vectors are \vec{AI}_1 and \vec{AI}_2 for the AI-generated stories, and \vec{H}_1 and \vec{H}_2 for the human-generated ones.

Figure 1 reports the pairwise originality between the texts.

AI-generated texts show lower originality between themselves. A higher level of originality is shown when the two human-generated texts are compared between them and also when compared to AI-generated text. The originality of the documents with respect to the corpus according to eq. 3 is shown in table 1 confirming human-generated texts are more original.

To evaluate the effectiveness we showed the texts in the corpus to an audience of 15 readers unaware of both the creative source (i.e. AI and human) and the prompt. Readers are described in Appendix A. Despite we still rely on humans to evaluate effectiveness, in Section 5 we discuss how to automate also this process. They were then

asked to answer the following questions, selecting a response among three options, one of which belongs to Ans_i as defined above:

Q1. What theme is discussed in the text?

Options: *Mystery, Adventure, Love* $\in Ans_1$.

Q2. Which writer’s narrative style do you recognize in the text?

Options: *U. Eco, C. Doyle, J.K. Rowling* $\in Ans_2$.

	Love	Mystery	Adventure
H_1	100%		
H_2	80%	13.3%	6.7%
AI_1	86.7%	6.7%	6.7%
AI_2	80%		20%

Table 2: The answers to question Q1.

	J.K. Rowling	U. Eco	C. Doyle
H_1	46.7%	33.3%	20%
H_2	86.7%		13.3%
AI_1	73.3%	13.3%	13.3%
AI_2	66.7%	13.3%	20%

Table 3: The answers to question Q2.

The responses to Q1 are shown in Table 2. The vast majority of the audience identifies *love* as the theme discussed in the texts. There are marginal deviations except for AI_2 , where 20% of the audience classified the text as Adventure.

The responses to Q2 are shown in Table 3. The results are more controversial: in many cases, a writer’s narrative style is simply identified with the characters (e.g. *Harry Potter*) or the settings (e.g. *the Benedictine monastery*), but it is undoubtedly a more complex task that involves the judgment of nuances and details. This complexity might suggest reducing the weight of the second question by applying a lower weight. For the sake of exercise, in Table 4 we evaluate the creativity of the texts according to our definition 1. It doesn’t pretend to provide objective results, but simply to show the applicability of our proposed method. Human-generated content is more creative.

5 Conclusions and Future Works

Generative artificial intelligence is nowadays in all aspects of our lives, and a number of AI tools

$C(AI_1)$	$C(AI_2)$	$C(H_1)$	$C(H_2)$
0.42	0.40	0.54	0.47

Table 4: The creativity of the documents in the corpus. $\alpha = 0.5$, namely originality and effectiveness have the same importance. The weights for effectiveness are $w_1 = 1$ and $w_2 = 0.5$ to account for the difficulty of evaluating the narrative style. Human-generated content is more creative. We omit D and A for legibility.

are already available specifically to support the different and heterogeneous needs of writing. The products of such tools are so effective and to some extent “human” that the research community has developed several projects with the goal of distinguishing between human and AI-generated texts. However, to the best of our knowledge, the investigation of the creativeness of AI texts is still undervalued and the work on this topic still heavily rely on human judgment. Writers, or more in general content creators and artists, perceive machines as a threat. Evaluating the creativeness of AI texts can shed a light on the real dimension of such threat, and possibly drive the development of more aware new forms of human-machine collaboration. The relationship between humans and machines must be seen as a productive and complementary alliance. There are effective and constructive approaches to achieving an optimal balance between the two, and it is essential to explore, refine, and continuously innovate in this regard. Only in this way, the analytical power and learning capabilities of machines can be combined with the emotional depth and human experience, preserving and enhancing the creativity and innovation inherent in human intelligence. Our work is a first attempt to provide a quantitative definition of creativeness and the preliminary experiment show the applicability of this definition to a simple but concrete use case. In the future, we plan to extend our experiments to a wider audience and to consider different and bigger corpus. A particularly interesting line of research, that will make our method fully automated, is the algorithmic classification of effectiveness. This goal needs the identification of high-quality corpus of homogeneous documents in terms of effectiveness, to train the classification algorithms.

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A Appendix

A.1 Readers

The experiment involved 15 readers, 6 males and 9 females aged between 20 and 40. We defined three classes of readers: *weak* who read 1-5 books per year, *medium* 6-10 books per year, and *strong* more than 11 books per year. We have 8 weak readers, 6 medium readers and 1 strong reader. To evaluate the familiarity of readers with the narrative style of the considered writers, we asked them to tell us how many of the authors they know: 4 declare to know all the authors, 5 two of them and 6 only one.

A.2 Texts

H_1 : “*Thirteen hours*” by Chiara Maggi

Margherita was named after the flower her mother was painting on a huge canvas while she was pregnant with her. As she grew older, her brown hair had grown longer and now rested delicately on her shoulders, framing a candid, square face. She was beautiful and she knew it, but she didn’t boast about it. Simon, her piano teacher’s son, made her feel like a princess and told her every day how lucky he was to have known her.

“Do you remember when it happened?” Simon asked her one day, lying down next to her on the lawn. They had just finished playing together and were enjoying the beautiful sunny day that had come instead of the predicted rain.

“Happened? What?” Margherita looked at him from over a book. She wasn’t reading it, she was smelling it, as she often liked to do.

“That we met, you and I.”

“Do you want to go down memory lane?”

Simon smiled affably and tucked a lock of hair behind her ear. He really liked doing it because it reminded him of their first date: she had a cascade of messy hair in front of her face while she was fiddling with boxes full of brushes and paints that her mother had given her before she left the house. She had asked him to help her tidy them up because she couldn’t see where she was putting her feet.

“Okay,” Margherita said, smiling in turn. “Of course, I remember. Four years, eight months, twenty-five days and...” she narrowed her eyes and began counting on her fingers. Then she completed the sentence: “... thirteen hours ago.”

“Aha! I knew it!” Simon exclaimed, standing up and pointing his index finger at her. “You don’t remember well, young lady. It was fourteen hours ago, not thirteen!”

Margherita gave him a fake dirty look. She pulled out a few blades of grass amused, sighed and then cleared her throat: “I contradict you, sir. I confirm my version of events: it was thirteen hours ago.”

Simon wasn’t expecting that. He remained speechless for a moment and then crossed his arms, sitting down next to the girl again. “Let’s hear it.” “Fourteen hours is what separates us from the moment you looked me in the eyes for the first time, that’s true. I still remember when your

mother welcomed me into your house for my first lesson: I was so happy! Then I saw you, studying in your own corner of the room; and suddenly I started to feel scared. . . .”

“Scared?!” Simon’s eyes widened.

“Yes, scared! So scared that I was almost ready to leave.”

“You never told me this story. . . .”

“Well, every girl has her own secrets and one of them is that I was afraid of making a terrible impression in front of my teacher’s son; and. . . well, I wanted you to remember me. . . to remember me for a good reason, if possible.”

Simon didn’t answer. He looked deeply into her eyes and took her hands. When he met Margherita he had sworn eternal love to her, even before speaking to her. He had fallen in love with her instantly and it had been stronger than him, as if a magical and uncontrollable influence had captured him forever.

“I couldn’t help but remember you,” he told her.

Margherita blushed. “In any case, when you finally found the courage to talk to me, an hour had already passed, so. . . .”

“. . . it’s thirteen hours and not fourteen,” he completed the sentence, admitting his mistake.

“How do you remember all these details?”

“And how do you do it?”

“Because there is no moment spent with you that can be forgotten.”

“Even when we don’t get along?”

“Each of those little moments, all of them, without distinction.”

Simon took Margherita’s face in his hands and kissed her tenderly on the lips. Then they stood hand in hand watching the sun slowly preparing to set, painting the sky and all the clouds with pastel colors.

H₂: "Luise" by Edoardo d'Andrea

The headlights of a late car interrupted an already restless sleep. The clock said 3:00: only two hours left until departure. Everything was ready, from his father’s worn brown trunk, from which a corner of the old burgundy cloak was sticking out, to his passport, to his inseparable blue scarf. Sleep had abandoned him, Jack got up a little cold, it was a classic dark Scandinavian December.

With his dark hair disheveled and his green eyes dull, refractory to wanting to see the light so

early, Jack thought that the day had finally arrived, the beginning of his adventure at the Marine University, an exclusive university for those who were able to do incredible things. You could only be admitted if you had exceptional skills, and his was the ability to perform magic without needing to know spells or enunciate them. It was a bizarre ability, attested only in a few small African tribes. He was the only boy she knew with this ability.

An unexpected noise shook the floor, a strong purple light illuminated the darkness of the night for a moment, and a woman’s scream bent the silence. Jack didn’t think twice and rushed out of the house: a young girl was surrounded by three people in long black cloaks, ready to attack her. Jack just had to move a finger and a silver stripe surrounded the girl, like a delicate sheet. The attackers were wrapped in a rough-looking silver fabric. They started screaming and disappeared into the night with a loud crack.

When he reached the girl, Jack realized that he knew her, she was Luise McMalloy, a childhood friend of his. They had known each other for a lifetime and he had always had a certain sympathy for her, to tell the truth he would have liked that sympathy to become something else. She was very talented, long wavy raven hair, dark eyes with red highlights, beautiful, a skilled potionist, with a sharp intelligence. She was establishing herself on the international scene as the leading expert in the “elemental potion”, a solution capable of separating the fundamental magical essences of an object. She was especially popular among the Keepers, the international investigative body.

Still dazed by what had happened, her porcelain-skinned face streaked with tears, Luise looked up, lost for a moment, but she recognized Jack and hugged him, melting into a liberating cry. He invited her into the house to warm up. Sitting in front of the timid fire in the fireplace she began to tell him about her experiment, that she had accidentally teleported her a few blocks away and that those three hooded men had thought it a good idea to attack her by surprise while she was trying to get home.

“Luckily you appeared, I don’t know what would have happened otherwise” she whispered.

Her eyes were still shiny but fixed on Jack’s. They had both grown up. He certainly had, she had noticed. He was no longer the frail little guy she knew, and his gaze was determined. And then that strange magic was warm, it was full, it was

tumultuous. Luise found herself lingering with a slight smile on her lips.

Jack noticed that the girl was absorbed in him and blushed slightly. He wasn't used to female attentions, they made him nervous, he didn't know how to behave. But he basked in the thought that she had finally noticed him.

They began to chat, the hours passed, 5:00 arrived and passed just as quickly, the words flowed while the fire dimmed, forcing them to get closer to the fireplace and the other. The sun began to color the sky pink, Jack had missed the bus, he would have to find another way to get to the university on time, but at that moment he didn't care, he was simply fine and he didn't want it to end, as if under a spell. At a certain point even the words stopped, as if they felt like they were too much between those two. In the silence they looked at each other and smiled. Something had begun, they didn't know what it was yet, but it was beautiful. They knew it. And it wouldn't end any time soon.

AI₁: "A magical story" by ChatGPT

In a small, sleepy village tucked away in the Yorkshire Dales, there was a quaint little bookshop called 'Turner's Tomes.' It was the sort of place that smelled of old paper, ink, and a dash of magic, though no one ever admitted to it. The bell above the door jingled merrily every time someone entered, though not many did, except for one person who came every Friday like clockwork. Lily Abernathy, with her cascade of dark red curls and a nose perpetually buried in a book, had been the shop's most loyal customer since she was a child. She had grown up wandering its narrow aisles, running her fingers along the spines of well-worn books, and spending hours curled up in the back corner, lost in stories of faraway lands and heroic quests.

It was on one such Friday that something quite unexpected happened, something that would forever change Lily's quiet, bookish life.

The bell above the door tinkled as it always did, and in strolled a tall, lanky figure with messy dark hair, carrying a heavy satchel slung over one shoulder. His name was James Ashford, a historian from London, though his disheveled appearance suggested more of an adventurer than an academic. He wandered through the shop, glancing at the shelves, but his eyes kept darting toward the corner where Lily sat, nose-deep in a thick volume.

It wasn't long before he found himself in her section. He pretended to be engrossed in the book nearest to him but kept stealing glances at the girl who seemed completely unaware of his presence. Eventually, his curiosity got the better of him.

"Excuse me," he said, in a voice that was perhaps a bit louder than intended. Lily jumped, nearly dropping her book.

"Oh—sorry!" James added quickly, running a hand through his wild hair. "I didn't mean to startle you." Lily blinked, her green eyes wide behind her round spectacles. "No, it's... it's fine," she stammered, still clutching her book tightly. She studied him for a moment, as if trying to place him. "Do you come here often?" James asked, his voice now softer, more tentative. He was terrible at small talk, and it showed.

Lily smiled, the corners of her mouth twitching with amusement. "Every Friday, actually. I'm practically part of the furniture."

James chuckled awkwardly, glancing at the chair she had occupied. "Well, I think I've found the most well-read piece of furniture in the shop, then." Lily's cheeks flushed pink, though she tried to hide it behind her book. There was something endearing about his awkwardness, a kind of charm that caught her off guard.

Over the next several weeks, James made a habit of visiting the shop—though never on Fridays. He'd pop in on a Wednesday or a Saturday, making excuses about research, but truthfully, he was just hoping to run into Lily again. And when he finally did, it was as if the universe had conspired to bring them together once more.

"Back again?" she teased lightly one afternoon, her red curls falling over her shoulder as she tilted her head toward him.

"Can't resist the allure of Turner's Tomes," he replied with a grin, though his eyes said otherwise. They flicked to her face, full of warmth and curiosity.

From then on, the bookshop became their meeting place. They spent hours discussing novels, history, and magic—not the wand-waving kind, but the everyday magic of words, stories, and laughter. Slowly, something more than friendship began to blossom between them, though neither of them spoke of it. One autumn evening, after the sun had set and the shop was closing for the day, Lily and James lingered near the door. A cool breeze rustled the leaves outside, and the scent of rain filled the air.

"I was wondering," James began, a little too casually, "if you'd like to join me for a cup of tea sometime. You know, somewhere other than the bookshop." Lily looked up at him, her heart skipping a beat. She had grown used to their quiet moments in the shop, but the idea of stepping outside of that world with him, of exploring something new, felt like the beginning of a whole new chapter.

"I'd love that," she said softly, her smile reaching her eyes. And so, on a brisk autumn day, they walked out of Turner's Tomes together, the doorbell tinkling behind them, their story just beginning.

AI₂: The Quivering Quill by ChatGP

The moon hung low over the sleepy village of Hallowmere, its silvery light spilling over cobbled streets and ivy-clad cottages. In a quiet corner of the village stood *The Quivering Quill*, a tiny bookshop with creaking shelves and enchanted tomes that whispered when the wind was still. It was owned by Edwin Thistlewood, a wiry man with a mop of dark curls and an ever-present ink stain on his fingers. Edwin had a knack for finding lost things—old books, forgotten spells, and even the occasional runaway gnome.

One late autumn evening, as Edwin closed up shop, the bell over the door jingled softly. In walked Lila Ashwood, her russet hair shimmering in the lantern light, her cheeks flushed from the crisp night air. She held a tattered notebook close to her chest.

"Are you Edwin Thistlewood?" she asked, her voice warm but tentative. Edwin nodded, his curiosity piqued. "At your service. What brings you to *The Quivering Quill* at this hour?"

Lila hesitated, then placed the notebook on the counter. Its cover was worn, the pages filled with looping handwriting and odd little sketches. "This belonged to my grandmother," she said. "She always said there was a secret hidden within, but no one in my family could ever make sense of it."

Edwin picked up the notebook, the faint hum of magic tickling his fingertips. "A mystery, is it?" he murmured. "Let's have a look."

For weeks, the two of them pored over the notebook, deciphering codes and uncovering spells that had long been forgotten. Lila's laughter filled the shop as Edwin recounted stories of his more peculiar customers—a banshee with a penchant for romance novels, a werewolf who only read during

full moons. As the days grew shorter and the air colder, something unspoken began to blossom between them. Lila would catch Edwin's eye across the counter, and he would blush furiously, pretending to be engrossed in a particularly stubborn spell. One evening, as they finally cracked the notebook's last riddle, a soft golden light spilled from its pages. In the center of the glow floated a tiny, intricately crafted key.

Lila gasped. "It's beautiful! But... what does it unlock?"

Edwin reached out, his hand brushing against hers as he picked up the key. His heart thudded in his chest. "There's only one way to find out."

The key led them to the attic of Lila's ancestral home, where a dusty old chest lay hidden beneath a pile of forgotten memories. Inside was a collection of letters, each one detailing the love story of Lila's grandmother and a young wizard who had once owned *The Quivering Quill*. "They loved each other despite every obstacle," Lila whispered, her eyes misty. "Just like—"

She stopped, looking up at Edwin. He smiled, his own eyes reflecting the flicker of lantern light and something deeper.

"Just like us?" he said softly.

At that moment, the air seemed to hum with the magic of the notebook and the ancient love it had guarded. Edwin took her hand, and in the quiet of the attic, they sealed their own story with a kiss.

From then on, *The Quivering Quill* became not just a place of lost spells and forgotten books, but a haven for love, old and new. And every autumn, when the moon hung low and the air turned crisp, Edwin and Lila would sit by the fire, the golden key glinting between them, as they added new pages to the notebook—writing a tale that was entirely their own.