



# THE BEGINNING

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## IT'S: THE BEGINNING

When words first started pairing up, some found their quarters a bit crowded. Oddly, the big guys usually worked it out – bookworm, houseboat, dressmaker – but not everybody got along that well. Even little words like **it** and **is** could feel cramped when they started running together. Both were small, and they wanted to stay small, but together they doubled their letter count! So **Second i** made a decision. “Okay,” he said, “this is too constricting for me. **I** am a powerful enough letter that **I** can stand on my own, so have a nice life, but **I** am leaving.”

**First i**, **t** and **s** clustered together. “We just look like *its*, they moaned. “We are better than *its*. We need someone to fill in for **Second i**.”

Then **t** had an idea: “Remember that episode of Seinfeld where Kramer got hired as a seat filler? It was for the Oscars or the Emmys or something, I forget exactly. He got all dressed up and when an audience member wanted to go out for a cigarette or needed the bathroom or whatever, Kramer sat in their seat. That way, when the cameras panned across the audience, the theater would seem to be packed. What we need is the grammatical equivalent of Kramer.”

**First i** and **s** agreed. They put out the word, took applications and ran interviews. They advertised worldwide for a replacement letter. The problem, they found, was that all the other letters were bigger than **Second i**. He had left because the four of them were too cramped, so adding a wider letter just made things worse. The best candidate they got was lower case **l**, but she was quite tall.

One day **comma** came to audition. “You are going about this all wrong,” he explained. “Another letter is not what you need. Punctuation is your answer. Remember, Kramer was not a member of the elite, star-studded crowd he was filling in for. He was an average Joe with a nice suit.” Then **comma** flew to the top of the font and hung there between **t** and **s**. All three letters

glanced around in surprise. They looked very elegant with the punctuation in their midst. **Comma** had aced the audition with his unique approach.

Soon other words – who had wanted to hook up before, but had seen all the problems **it** and **is** were having – started hiring the flying **comma** (who adopted the stage name **Apostrophe**) to fill their metaphorical empty seats. The letter **o** hired **Apostrophe** frequently, even though it was more expensive for him because he put **Apostrophe** in some pretty negative positions– isn't, wasn't, didn't. (**O** thought himself quite a ladies man and this way he could make the rounds without commitment.)

As **Apostrophe** gained experience filling in for single letters, he expanded his talents. Dual-letter roles were harder, but he felt more positive in them – could've, would've, should've. Occasionally he even got top billing in these roles – 'cause, 'til. **Apostrophe** played these parts by imagining Kramer draping himself over both seats. Kramer was a great inspiration for **Apostrophe**. **Comma** turned over his previous punctuation responsibilities to his little brother, who kept the name to avoid confusion.

Then came ever bigger challenges – he'd (he would), she'd (she would), they'd (they would). These required filling four letter-seats – and a space! - all at once. **Apostrophe** felt he had outmatched even Kramer; filling the space between the words was like Kramer stretching across the aisle. (**Apostrophe** remembered the episode, and Kramer had not accomplished that feat.)

Alas, as happens to many a star, the great career he had built eventually overcame **Apostrophe**. His legacy lived on, but he had done every part available. As his new bookings dropped, he got hooked on possessives. He told himself he was “helping others claim their own.” But really he was filling in for nobody, just dropping by for quick cameo appearances – Barney's,

Elaine's, Paul's. Once in a while **Apostrophe** would get to hang out with his idol: Kramer's.

It was a sad demise. **Apostrophe** was still in tight with editors and proofreaders, but more and more authors found him confusing. His brother had let the comma franchise pale as well. Authors now threw in commas randomly or left them out when they were needed. (Let's eat, Mom!)

**Apostrophe** finally sank so low that he was asked to do plurals. But even he still had some standards and he refused to degrade himself that far. Well, unless one of his possessive friends needed a favor. Then **Apostrophe** would step in, but even then he preferred to hang out at the end of the word – teachers', contractors'. He equated working with plurals to allowing nudity – he only did it if it was vital to the plot. Plural possessives needed **Apostrophe** so he was happy to work with them.

Since **Apostrophe** refused most plurals, less reputable authors would often send in look-alikes. These plurals would *appear* to have **Apostrophes**, but he would not be involved. The situation further deteriorated his reputation as an upscale punctuation mark. On paper he was flying high, but in his heart he had fallen far.

And that's where **Apostrophe** stands today. Contractions and possessives are his legacy. He still works closely with the editors and proofreaders of the world, so if you have any questions as to where he might go, contact one of them.

Your readers will thank you.

Applause.

Fade to black.