With a full tank and a juicy steak to boot, you exhale a sigh of contentment at the money you’ve just saved, and relax in your seat. As you are about to drive away, a violent commotion breaks out between a slightly elderly looking man and a couple of large, burly, service station attendants in greasy overalls. After an embarrassing moment of indecision you decide to intervene, carefully setting down the plate of beef on the front passenger seat before doing so. But before you can get anywhere near the scuffle the elderly man astounds you by pulling some deftly executed martial arts moves, sending the two service station attendants sprawling to the ground.

Those furrowed eyebrows and his balding head, which moments ago suggested a hard and miserable life, now lend him a peculiar sense of gravitas. He notices your stunned expression and strikes a strong-man pose. “You know it makes sense. I’m Sam Kekovich.” . . . He’s right, it’s all making sense now...

Before you can figure out what to say, Sam has marched over to you. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out scraps of paper, and hands to you a piece that he carelessly selects. “Strewth, gave ’em a right wallop, didn’t I mate. Now I know a true-blue Aussie when I see one mate, and I reckon you got out of your car just to help a fellow battler. So thanks mate, and here: take this—it’s me autograph. These blokes are bad news, so make sure you touch none of the beef they’re trynna flog. Go home and chuck some lamb on the barbie. You know it makes sense. I’m Sam Kekovich.”

In awe of his presence, you graciously accept the autograph, and continue to watch in stunned silence as he dashes off, his thongs leaving a trail of echoing “flip-flops”.

Taking a closer look at the gift in your hand, you see no autograph, but find it filled with seemingly random words—so much for the fairytale anecdote to tell the grandkids. As you toy around with the scrap piece of paper, it suddenly dawns upon you that the grim message written on it is probably not meant for your eyes.
In olden times when wishing still helped,

there lived a king whose daughters were

in her face. Close by the king’s
castle lay a great dark forest and
under an old lime-tree

whenever it shone

was astonished

rhythmic
crochet
pitch

plain
bale
wrench
DERIVATION

in her face

conch
beech
sonata

itself, which

TUMULTUOUS
cheese
drawn
cart
firings

BOISTEROUS
pursue

DIFFUSION

examine
magnolia
weal
game

CONTEMPORARY
ADVERSARY

was astonished

whenever it shone