

**There Once  
Was A Book  
Of Really  
Short  
Stories**

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## Introduction

Sometimes the most interesting way to say something is to say it in the form of an allegory.

Such illustrations cause the hearer to pause for a moment and look more deeply at the message hidden in the story.

I hope you find the following stories to be both insightful and entertaining.

## One

There once was a man who thought he was smart, but lacked wisdom.

Then he gave up being smart, and became wise.

## Two

There once was a woman who lent \$100 to a friend. When the friend didn't pay her back, she asked her for the money.

The friend said, "I'll have it for you soon."

A long time went by and the friend still hadn't returned the money. The woman asked her friend for it again, but the friend changed the subject.

The woman never heard from that friend again.

A much larger betrayal was prevented.

### Three

There once was a young man in need of charity. He had been laid-off from his job and didn't have enough money to buy food.

A friend of his offered to lend him money, but he refused.

So the friend said, "you don't have to pay me back".

But the man still wouldn't take the money. "I have my pride", he said.

"That's the problem", said the friend.

## Four

There once was a woman who dreamed of living a rich life. She wanted only the best. The best clothes, the best car, the best house.

She worked hard, and felt that she deserved to live a life of luxury. She looked down on the idea of shopping at second-hand stores or living in a humble abode. To her, that was a form of giving up. And she feared the judgement of her friends.

Then, life handed her a set of circumstances that forced her to abandon her material ideals.

She was finally able to live a rich life.

## Five

There once was a man who treated everything like a contest. Everything was about advancing himself over others.

But then one day it became difficult for him to compete. His body wouldn't allow it anymore and his mind had lost the drive. He was forced to engage the world under different terms.

When he competed with the world, the world seemed to compete with him. Now he could see that he had really been competing with himself.



## Six

There once was a woman who prayed to God for help.

God said, "go pick up that shovel and start digging".

But the woman said, "no, I want a miracle."

So the woman remained unhappy.

## Seven

There once was a man who asked God to heal him.

God said, "you'll survive, but your body won't be the same. There will be some lingering pain."

The man asked God to take away all his pain.

But God said, "no one lives without pain. There's a lesson in it. Trust me, it's for your own good. One day you'll understand."

## Eight

There once was a boy who asked God for many things.

God said, "you'll have everything you desire, but it won't happen the way you expect it to."

"What do you mean?" the boy asked.

"You don't fully know what you want. Many of the things you think are good for you, aren't. And many of the things you think aren't good for you, are actually what you need most. Also, it won't all happen in this life. There is another life that awaits you, where what you desire will be fully realized in its true form. What you truly seek will remain formless and nameless in your current life. One day you'll understand what this all means."

## Nine

There once was a woman who prayed to God for all the things she wanted in life.

God said, "stop telling me about everything you want, and listen to me."

But the woman didn't hear him.

## Ten

There once was a young man who loved a young woman.

He was heart-broken when the woman didn't love him back.

He had broken his own heart. He was in love with a fantasy he had created.

## Eleven

There once was a young woman who believed in true love. Then she got married and realized that love isn't as it is portrayed in fairy tales.

The love she had for her husband was real, but it was full of holes. She realized that the holes existed because of flaws.

She saw that her flaws and her husband's flaws, made love difficult at times, and that love was not just a feeling but a choice to forgive many times over.

She didn't live happily ever after, but she became more God-like and she was happy most of the time.

## Twelve

There once was a man who demanded that God give him a clear explanation for the meaning of life.

God told him to let go of his desire for clarity.

But the man was not satisfied with God's response and criticized it.

God said, "it's fine to be critical, but don't let it get in the way of understanding. The truth can't be accurately described in words, but you can catch a glimpse of it if your eyes are open."

## Thirteen

There once was a woman who told herself she could be anything she wanted to be.

She was deeply disappointed when she realized that there are limitations in life.

There once was another woman who resigned herself to what she believed was her lot in life.

She didn't realize she was selling herself short.



## Fourteen

There once was a man who thought he knew what was best for everyone, but didn't know what was best for himself.

Nobody respected him.

## Fifteen

There once was a woman who spoke confidently about things she didn't understand.

Those who understood, knew she was a fool.

## Sixteen

There once was a man who tried to reason with an unreasonable person.

Persistence was futile.

## Seventeen

There once was a woman who was annoyed by human stupidity.

Everyone's except her own.

## Eighteen

There once was a young man who said to his teacher, "I won't listen to anything you say unless it's a verifiable fact. If I can't find it in a scholarly journal, it's not true."

The young student was a proud skeptic. As a result, he became very knowledgeable.

Then one day his teacher asked him why he missed his last exam.

The young man said, "I was sick and couldn't make it in."

The teach said, "where is your sick note from your doctor?"

The young man said he didn't have one because he had been too sick to get out of bed.

The teacher said, "I won't accept that you were sick, until you can prove it. Nor do I accept that you have learned anything in this class."

## Nineteen

There once was a woman who wanted everyone to feel sorry for her.

But nobody did, because she had already given herself more sympathy than she needed.

## Twenty

There once was a man who thought everyone should be like him.

Then one day he met someone who was just like him. They got along so well that the man started arguing against things he actually supported.

He didn't actually want everyone to be like him. He wanted to always be one step ahead of everyone. He wanted everyone to *admire* him.

## Twenty-One

There once was a woman who always told people what she thought, but never asked others what they thought.

To the unwise she seemed wise. To the wise she was a fool.



## Twenty-Two

There once was a man who became a father for the first time. He was proud to be a father and enjoyed the idea of having a little one to pass his knowledge on to. And he imagined that the child would grow up to admire him.

What he never thought of, was to show the child affection. To him, being a father was about taking care of the child's material needs and teaching the child practical things about the world.

He was a father, but not a dad.

## Twenty-Three

There once was a young boy who wanted his father's approval. He did things that made his father proud, but the father rarely let him know how proud he was.

When the boy became a man, he out-did his father in many ways. This was what the father wanted to happen, but when faced with it, he couldn't accept it. So the father dismissed many of the son's accomplishments.

When the father and son would speak, the father would try to one-up the son. He would diminish the son's accomplishments and glorify his own.

Thus, the father and son never became friends.

## Twenty-Four

There once was a little girl who didn't get enough attention from her parents.

One day, when she was about five years old, she heard a line from a movie where a man said to his wife "this child is the manifestation of our love and will forever be the object of our love." The wife had just given birth.

After hearing this, the little girl went to her mother and said "why do you always ignore me, aren't I the object of your love?" The mother began to cry and said "yes you are, and you always will be."

From that day on the mother made sure to make those words true.

## Twenty-Five

There once was a young boy who was encouraged by his parents to be more independent. They wanted him to grow up to be a strong independent man.

They said to him, "we shouldn't have to tell you what to do. We've taught you what to do, and your school teachers have taught you what to do. You need to take responsibility for yourself."

This didn't sink in at first, but eventually he did grow up and become his own man. You could hardly find anyone more independent or responsible than he was. Yet his parents criticized his decisions and spoke to him like he was a child, telling him what he should and shouldn't do.

When he was a child they wanted him to be a man. When he was a man they wanted him to be a child.

## Twenty-Six

There once was a man who everyone considered stubborn. He preferred to go against the rules and do what he wanted. This helped him at times, because he was able to avoid some of the traps that crowd followers would fall into.

Unfortunately, his stubbornness was so extreme that even when the crowd was right he would go against it. The desire to feel as though he was right was more important to him than making the best decisions.

There once was another man who was also considered stubborn. He also preferred to go against the rules and do what he wanted. And he too liked the feeling of being right.

The difference with the second man was that he preferred results more than he liked believing he was right.

## Twenty-Seven

There once was a young boy who admired superheroes. He wanted to have big muscles just like they did, so he could use his strength to help people and to impress them.

The boy grew up and built the big muscles he admired in his childhood. And as he had envisioned, his strength enabled him to help and impress many people.

But his biggest triumphs came in his later years, when his muscles shrank and his physical strength deteriorated. He found that he could help people in a much bigger way through the strength of his mind and his heart than he ever could with his muscles. And he no longer cared about impressing people.

Thus, he became a true hero.

## Twenty-Eight

There once was a young lady who followed the advice of her parents and teachers who taught her to always follow conventional wisdom. As a result, she grew up to become a very competent manager of a mid-sized retail store owned by a large conglomerate.

Then, after thirty years of service, she was let go. The company needed to downsize and give the younger more innovative minds a chance to turn the business around.

A few weeks later, the girl, who was now passed middle age, ran into an old childhood friend. The childhood friend, who had also been schooled in the ways of conformity, had abandoned conventional wisdom after several years of being a loyal employee of a large company. She had embraced her unique individuality and created a business of her own that was thriving in the new economy which rewarded outliers.

The old friend told her, "it's not too late to find your true self and follow where it leads."

## Twenty-Nine

There once was a woman who was gracious to everyone she met. This caused her to have many allies, but very few enemies.

Her allies saw her graciousness as a strength. They respected her and had no desire to take advantage of her.

Her enemies say her gracious nature as a weakness and wished to exploit it. But her allies were too strong for them.



## Thirty

There once was a man who took himself too seriously. He treated everything like it was serious business, and he never let his guard down. Anyone who questioned him was met with hostility. Even the slightest offences were treated like acts of war.

This tough, stand-offish demeanor caused some people to look up to him. They saw him as a strong leader. But none were his friend, because none could get close enough to the real him.

Eventually, even those who followed him, departed. They found someone else they admired more. Someone who was tough when he needed to be and vulnerable enough that people knew who he really was and how deeply he cared.

## Thirty-One

There once was a young woman who projected confidence on the outside, but was deeply insecure about who she was on the inside. Her outer confidence over-compensated for her lack of inner confidence, to the point that she could easily become combative.

Her combative nature was seen by some as a sign of strength, but others saw it as a sign of weakness.

Thus, the enemies she made were precisely those who knew her weaknesses.

## Thirty-Two

There once was a man who used violence and intimidation to get people to do what he wanted.

But most of the people he dealt with, including those who complied with him, didn't respect him. And it only took one disgruntled victim to seek retribution at an opportune time.

## Thirty-Three

There once was a man who bet all his money on a long-shot and lost it all. He knew it was a long-shot, but went for it anyway.

There once was another man who also risked everything on a long-shot and lost it all. The difference was that this man didn't know it was a long-shot.

The second man was just as foolish as the first man, because he risked everything without doing his homework.

## Thirty-Four

There once was a woman who risked very little to get what she needed.

Then, once she had what she needed, she risked everything to get something she didn't need.

She had followed up a wise decision with a foolish one. And both times there was no stopping her.

## Thirty-Five

There once was a woman who made hasty decisions. She got excited when she thought she had a good idea. She felt like she couldn't lose.

But her impulsive decisions got her into trouble, frequently.

Everyone has ideas. Few have patience.

## Thirty-Six

There once was a man who made very few commitments, but when he said he would do something he did it.

There once was another man who frequently made commitments, but kept very few of them.

Each man viewed the other as selfish.

## Thirty-Seven

There once was a man who lived a life of crime.

One day, a woman asked him why he lived the way he did and how he justified it to himself.

“It’s about survival”, the man replied.

“What’s the point of surviving?”, asked the woman.

He had no response.



## Thirty-Eight

There once was a woman who enjoyed reading biographies. She loved the idea of learning from the lives of other people. Especially people who were more successful than her. This was very beneficial to her. She learned a lot and was able to become successful.

There once was another woman who also enjoyed reading biographies of people more successful than her. But this was not beneficial to her.

The first woman learned from the successes and failures of the people she read about. The second woman tried to *be* the people she read about.

## Thirty-Nine

There once was a woman who wanted to be a writer. She said to herself that she would follow the example of great writers. So she copied them.

There once was another woman who also wanted to be a writer. She also decided she would follow the example of great writers. So she found her unique voice.

## Forty

There once was a young man who was afraid of the world. Deep down he was brave, but he believed what others said about him.

Eventually, he learned to put on a brave face and make the world believe he was brave. But he didn't believe it himself.

As the young man got older he gained more confidence in himself. But it wasn't until he learned to let go, that he began to understand what real bravery was. He learned to let go of what other people said about him.

## Forty-One

There once was a man who warned his people about their folly.

There once was another man who warned the same people about the first man.

Most of the people ignored the warning of the first man and heeded the warning of the second man.

The second man, by attacking the character of the first man, gave the people permission to carry on with their folly.

Those who heeded the warning of the first man examined themselves thoroughly. Those who heeded the warning of the second man examined the first man thoroughly.

## Forty-Two

There once was a woman who was happy when things were going her way, but when things weren't going her way she became very unhappy.

She chased happiness instead of peace.

## Forty-Three

There once was a young man who moved to the city in search of adventure and success.

He found both. But he also found heartache and depression.

Then, the man abandoned the pursuit of adventure and success. He began to pursue peace and wisdom instead.

He found them, and never looked back.

## Forty-Four

There once was a man who lived alone in the woods. People thought he was crazy for living that way. They didn't understand it.

One day, a young woman asked him why he lived that way.

"Aren't you bored and lonely?" She said.

"Aren't you worried about what others are saying about you?"

"It's the people who live in society who are bored and lonely", the man said.

"That's why they need to own so many things. That's why they always need to be around others. That's why they need drugs, alcohol, and excessive amounts of food. They need these things, because they don't know how to live the way I do. But once you know how to live this way, you realize how much you already have and how little you need. As for reputation, what good does it do me out here?"

## Forty-Five

There once was a woman who had everything money could buy, but lacked inner peace.

She had nothing.

There once was another woman who had just enough money for the things she needed, and she had inner peace.

She had everything.



## Forty-Six

There once was a man who wanted everything explained to him.

He was never satisfied.

There once was another man who left room for some mystery in his life.

He found peace.

## Forty-Seven

There once was a man who got mugged walking home from the store.

The mugger produced a knife and demanded that the man handover his wallet.

The man showed no signs of fear and gently said to the mugger, "my last fifty dollars are in that wallet, how will I feed my family"?

The mugger let him be.

## Forty-Eight

There once was a woman who shared her opinions openly. Because of her honesty and insightfulness the woman grew in popularity.

Her fame eventually brought wealth and more praise.

It also brought public criticism. Her critics increased and their remarks found a larger audience.

This caused the woman to recoil. She began to guard herself against criticism. Thus, her words lost power and the very thing she feared came true.

## Forty-Nine

There once was a man who inherited a lot of money from a distant relative. He hadn't been expecting it. It was a complete surprise.

At first, he was very grateful for the money. He recognized what a blessing it was. But it wasn't long before he feared losing it.

## Fifty

There once was a man who was very quiet. Because of his quietness, people thought the man lacked confidence. His quietness made others feel uncomfortable.

One day, a lady asked the man why he was so shy.

"Shy?" The man replied. "I'm not shy at all."

"But you hardly say anything", the woman replied. "Why don't you come out of your shell, we won't bite you."

"I'm not quiet because of fear", said the man. "I'm quiet because this is the natural state of man. It's those who insist on a lot of chatter who are truly afraid. They're afraid of silence. They're afraid to be with their true self. They're afraid of rejection. I'm afraid of those things too, but I'm conquering my fears through silence. The strong are considered weak and the weak are considered strong, that's the way of the world, but it's not the way of the spirit."

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