



# **101 Story Starters**

*Picture and Word Prompts  
to Spark Your Imagination*

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# For Writer's Block

Write your outline in the space provided.

Or jot the first thing that comes to mind.

Return later to write your story!

1

The shack looked abandoned on first appearance. Piles of bagged garbage told a different story. Someone was living there.



3

## 2

The old man gently grabbed my arm and turned me to face him. Toothless, balding, and stooped, he looked harmless. Little did I know he had the strength of a twenty-year-old.



3

**FORBIDDEN**



5

# 4

## THE WEIGHT OF DECISION

“Your choice,” stepping so close that their lips almost touched, he whispered in her ear.

“Either do what I say – or you may as well look for another job.”

Her heart froze as she weighed the choices. She was attracted to her boss, but was the task he demanded worth it?”

## 5

Morgan was a fighter. She grew up scrapping with her parents, siblings, classmates, and friends. She thought she knew how to fight and fight well, but on the night she was taken, she had to summon all her reserves to simply stay alive.



6

## **NOT MY FAULT**

At first, it was all about revenge. Now, it had gone way too far. Allie didn't intend to really hurt her best friend; she just wanted to teach her a lesson.



## THE RED CURTAIN



The old house looked scarier than he remembered. Broken windows and bare boards told a story that someone wanted to be hidden.

And then he saw the red curtain in the open window. Was someone trying to get his attention?

## 8

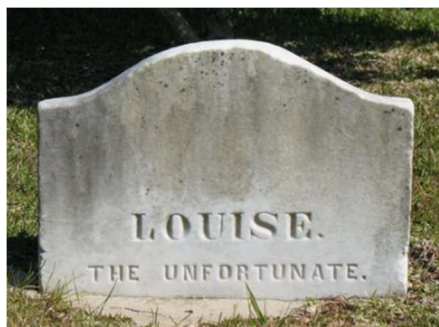
# INCOMING

She swiped the pesky insect to the floor, then grabbed her neck, where the searing pain erupted. She fell to the floor face-to-face with her tiny attacker, now beeping and flashing a strange light.

“Houston, we have a problem...” the captain inside the downed vessel coded.

9

## LOUISE, THE UNFORTUNATE



Someone cared enough to erect a headstone after her untimely death, but who? And who was Louise?

# 10

It appeared slowly as the tide went out, its rugged humped back rising as if to strike the island ahead.

# 11



“I love you, Danny.” Sarah gritted her teeth as she whispered to the sleeping man on the couch. “But you can never know what I’ve done...or what I’m about to do.”

As she stuffed the last item into her coat, Danny aroused with a bewildered look.

**12**

## **THE JOB**

He was promised full payment for the job, but he only got one small bag – filled with thirty silver coins.

13



**LOOK WHAT I  
FOUND!**

The attic was full of surprises!

# 14

## THE HOUSE

The old house had gone through several owners. The last one left lots of junk behind. Piles of bones lay behind the outside shed. Blood was found under the ripped-up carpet. We should have taken heed. But it was when we removed the countertop that we got the chill of our lives.



# 15

The wild-looking lady ran out of the shack as if bitten by a rabid dog. Into the woods to the edge of the cliff; she stopped... only inches from the precipice. Vacant eyes stared at the moon as she howled like a wounded animal.

16

## BEYOND THE SUNFLOWER FIELD



The brook gurgled, bluebirds sang, and puffy white clouds dotted the azure sky. The scene was peaceful and quiet, but one could only guess what happened in the old shack beyond the pretty sunflower fields.

# 17

The old guitar didn't look worth much in the pawn shop. Got it for a steal.  
But it had an incredible story all its own.



**18**

## **ABANDONED**

The children huddled together for warmth. Icy pellets stung their little faces. How much longer before someone would come for them? And where did everyone go?

# 19



The stone-cold stare of her dead blue eyes told it all. She sat mute, still, looking straight ahead. Would she tell the police the secrets she held inside?

**20**

## **THE DARE**

It began as a fraternity dare, “a rite of passage,” they said. Gary began to have second thoughts three days into eating from the dumpster. Would they remember he was there?



The old seamstress carefully selected the filaments to be sewn into the cloth. They had to be large enough to pick up the satellite signal while remaining invisible to the naked eye.

## THE EXPERIMENT

She had always wanted a child. Finding herself barren was almost more than she could bear. So when she found herself pregnant, she was ecstatic. When the baby was born, her loving gaze turned to horror. She was about to be in for the biggest challenge of her life.



23

## THE RED PORCH SWING



The red swing stuck out like a sore thumb. Did its red paint hide a secret beneath its fresh coat? And why was the attic window boarded up? Detective Jones was determined to find out.

24

## WARNING

“Get down. Flat. On your belly!”

The boy looked at him with inquisitive eyes. He looked around but saw nothing. But the man’s whisper sounded gruff. Scared.

“He’s coming straight for you.”

## THE MIDNIGHT CALL

The cell phone rang on Saturday night. It was midnight. The call went dead upon the pastor's answer. A second call at 3:00 am, followed by 3:15, then again at 3:30 am. Each one, a hangup.



“Who’s there? Why are you doing this?” he demanded.

At 4:00 am, it rang again. “I just peed on every pew,” the low, gruff voice said, “and I’m contaminated. I dare you to come get me.”

26

## THE GOLD FIGURINE

It sat on the shelf for many years, passed down from generation to generation. Each family struggled financially to make ends meet, not realizing the gift they held in their hands. Their discovery will shock the world.

27

## HIDING or TRAPPED?



28

## THE ASSIGNMENT

You've been given a box with four items: 1) an envelope; 2) a smaller box; 3) a key; and 4) a photo.



The box has a note: Give these items to four random people. Select the victims carefully. It may mean life or death.

29

## THE HIDDEN STAIRCASE



**30**

## **GOING FOR A RIDE**

You order an Uber, but instead of taking you where you want to go, he takes you to where you need to go.

Is it to fulfill a promise? Carry out your purpose? Or meet someone who will change your life forever?



31

## THE TREE CLIMBER



## Medicine Man

After the apocalypse, no medicine can be found. Doctors are gone but people come to know about the Medicine Man. He can speak but chooses not to. Rumor spreads that his tongue had been cut out for infractions of policy and going against the New World order.

Traveling far and wide, people come to seek healing. He knows how to use food remedies and conjure weed tinctures to heal. He healed them– but it was against the law.

33

# ALONE



Now alone with her thoughts, she could only think of one thing. What would she do?

# 34

Sitting in the subway, you're waiting for your train, looking at your phone, minding your business.

A woman comes toward you and thrusts her baby into your arms. Her frightened look says it all. "Take her and go. Quickly. They're coming for her."

35

## THE PORTAL



Hidden in the deep recesses of the forest, the teens found something very unusual. Unlike anything they had ever seen, the trees seemed to open up before them, revealing steps to the unknown.

36

## PREDICAMENT

Steeped in tradition, how can she tell her mother, the Queen, that she only wants a simple wedding. No pageantry, no frills. And how can she reveal that she's really in love with the gardener's son, not the man she's engaged to?

37

## FOREBODING



It hung over us like a foreboding, angry monster. No one could fathom what would come next.

**38**

## **DOUBLE TROUBLE**

Twin sisters have been separated at birth. Both are getting married. Both think they are marrying the man of their dreams – until they meet one another's fiance.



39

## TREASURES



The old woman had that 'knowing' kind of smile. Contented with life as it was and now is. One that held treasures of the unknown. Could I persuade her to share her great wisdom with me?

**40**

## **DNA ROBBER**

He feared the promised day – knowing that his number would be called at some point. They wanted his DNA – but why? And would he survive the process? Should he run, or accept his fate?

41

## OLD GLORY

“I’ll never forget that night,” said Sam. Pride flowed through his being as a tear crept down his cheek.



42

## MUFFLED CRIES

Buying the massive mansion at a steal, David considered his stroke of luck. But after a few nights there, the muffled cries sent chills up his spine. Were they real? Or was he only imagining the superstitious stories told about the place?

43

## THE LOCKET



Who owned it? Who gave it? Who wore it? Was it an heirloom? Whose picture was inside? Did it have a special meaning, or was it just a piece of costume jewelry?

## THE MESSAGE

Young Judy and Tom dug through the treasure chest in the attic. Nothing but junk, they thought.

“Look! A scroll.” Tom picked up a parchment rolled up like a cigar. Unrolling it, they stare at the unusual writing. “Must be code or another language,” Tom said.

“Grandma could read this,” Judy said.

“But she would get in trouble with the law,” Tom warned, “and so will we if we’re found with it.”

45

## SECRETS & DREAMS



## THE DREAM PILLOW

“Make sure you plug in my pillow, dear,” Sally called to her husband. “I want it fluffy so I have happy dreams tonight.”

The newest invention, a digital pillow, was said to have magical effects on one’s dream world. Little did Sally know, the pillow was sucking her memories out every night, moving them into one big database. One. By. One.





There had been better days, but we would survive.

Hal closed his eyes, inhaled deeply, then took the plunge. He never felt such exhilaration before.

49

## THE UNTOLD STORY



The old homestead and Dodge brought back so many vivid memories. It was like it was happening all over again.

## 50

The woman ran out of the shack as if bitten by a rabid dog. Into the woods to the cliff's edge, she stopped... only inches from the precipice. Vacant eyes stared at the moon as she howled like a wounded animal.

51

## BIRTHDAY

Today would be my last birthday party. Twelve years is such a long time to live. I knew it long before anyone else, but did not let on that I knew. I know what's in store for me on the other side. But do they?



52

## Behind the Wall

Four-year-old Ginny kept hearing bumps in the night. She swore to her Mommy she heard something behind the wall, but no one would believe her. Until the day she disappeared...



“Let me explain....”

**54**

## **Storm Stalker**

To see Joe on the outside, he looked like a mousy, weak, and incapable man. No one knew his true identity – the unnamed hero that came out when no one was looking. His only goal: to help the weak and incapable. The storms he encounters will challenge his own abilities and beliefs.



55

## CAMEO



Two girls find a beautiful old cameo buried beneath a chestful of costume jewelry. They want to believe it belonged to their great-grandmother, Marti, until they see the engraving on the back: “To my dear Em. Right for me.” Love Jim

Jim was their great grandfather – but who was Em?

56

## Quads

A introverted news reporter comes across a story involving a rich, snooty model, a famous lawyer, and a homeless vagrant. As he starts to investigate, he finds they all have one common trait, and it's the same one as his. He begins to wonder if he's somehow related....

## The Pretty Poison



People had become addicted to synthetics and implants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But in the future, these items are unavailable. Without regular injections, the implants explode, leaking lethal doses of poison into one's system.

It leaves a civilization of disfigured monsters seeking revenge for the lies they were told.

## 58

Grace Mathews was an ordinary pastor's wife, just doing her duty to the church. Living up to her name, she loved the people and showed them grace at every turn. But when they moved to Normalville, ministry turned out to be anything but normal.

59

## Reflection

The mirror captured everything. But something doesn't seem right. One day, you realize the truth. YOU are the reflection.



60

## The Old Book

An old book dating back to the 1600s is found in a second-hand store. The words look strange, but archivist David Young, is determined to find out its meaning. What treasures does this book hold?

61

## Rescue

The year is 1861. Twelve-year-old Sara ran into the forest when she saw the raging housefire. Her parents had been burned alive by the marauders, and they were coming for her. Captured, she was raised as a slave. Then she meets the love of her life: the son of a Revolutionary War soldier who helps her escape.



## 62

“Mom, I’m going to war. I’ve just been deployed.”

War had not been declared anywhere in the world.

“I just wanted you to know in case you don’t hear from me again.”

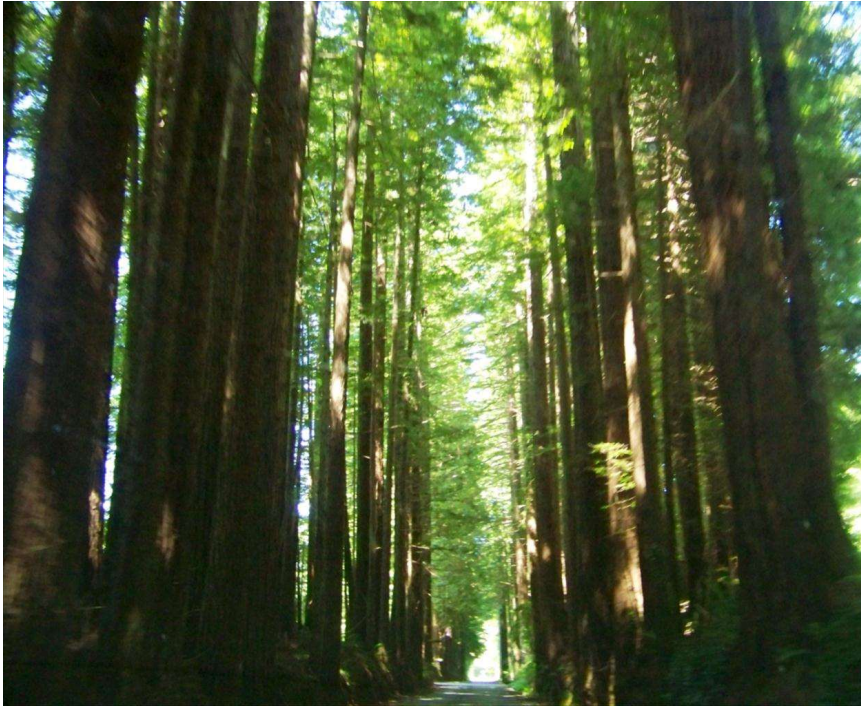
The fear that grabbed Joan’s heart made her collapse. “When do you leave?” She heard her tiny voice squeak. “Can you come home first?”

“No. We leave in two hours.”



63

## The Ancients



Like sentries, they stood above, surrounding and guarding the forest. Hundreds of years old, what stories and secrets did these trees hold?

# 64

Charlie hung on for dear life. Whatever possessed him to grab that rope?

65

## Together Forever



## Earth Swallower

Sink holes began appearing all over the city. Scientist Dillard couldn't explain why the sudden cracks in the earth. As he slept in his bed one night, the earth swallowed him alive. Falling into the endless dark, Dillard knew he'd never be found again. He would have to find his own way out.

## Bag of Rocks

On John's last visit to his Grandpa Whitlock, he was given a small bag with an unusual symbol on the front. His grandfather tells him to keep it safe because it's a family heirloom. Upon opening the bag, he scoffs, "It's only a bag of rocks."



Little did John know the treasure his grandfather gave him until crazy things started to happen.

She watched him board the bus with longing in her eyes. She wished it didn't have to be this way, but there was no going back now.

69

## THE SODDY



## 70

Jimmy shrugged away the creepy thoughts invading his mind. It was scary in the woods at night alone— especially when he was told not to leave the house.





**72**

## **MISFIT**

Dressed in black, her hair dyed black, lips black. Everything black – down to her fingertips and toenails. She hungered to fit in, but she didn't think it would be like this.



# 74

An empty Chinese takeout box was found at the scene of the crime. The residue of contents was not food, but traces of cocaine. Was the restaurant only a front for a much bigger operation? Detective Carlson was determined to find out.

## 75

Its claim was to provide protection – a sort of ‘house god.’  
Sam bought it on a whim, the eyes intrigued him. He  
found the powers it held went way beyond protection.  
That’s why he removed the eyes.



76

## CHOOSE CAREFULLY

You arrive in a hotel and are taken to the twentieth floor. At the end of the hallway you see doors to rooms on either side. They all look the same, but the door on the end intrigues you. When you turn the knob to go in, you gasp. Was this the correct choice for your life?

## LAST DANCE FOR ME

Lisa strapped on her pink ballerina slippers as the tears flowed from her eyes. Would this be her last dance? Her thoughts tumbled in turmoil as she rubbed her extended belly.



## 78

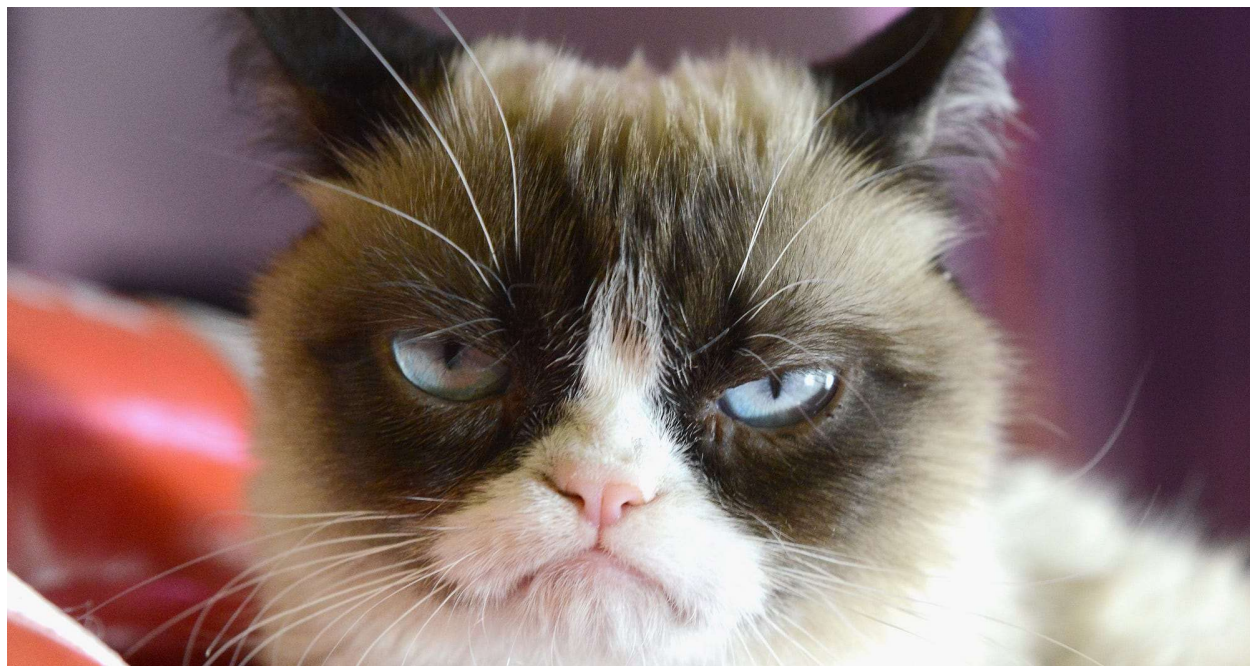
“You came back for me,” she said as tears filled her already-swollen eyes.

He pulled her close into his arms and whispered in her ear. “I told you. I’d never leave you.”



79

## THE NEIGHBOR



## 80

Three-year-old Jenny kept batting at her ears. Her parents tried soothing her, disciplining her, sending her to her room. Nothing helped. The doctors could not find anything wrong. But then, they discovered something very unusual.

81

## THE OAK DOOR



83

“Could it be Laura?” He questioned himself again. The woman’s hair was a different color and style. Her eyes were a different color. Her face had changed. Even though it had been twenty years, he couldn’t mistake the way she wrinkled her pixie nose, or the look she gave him when he kissed her. Did it even matter that she was part of the opposition?

83

## THE JEWELLED SCARAB



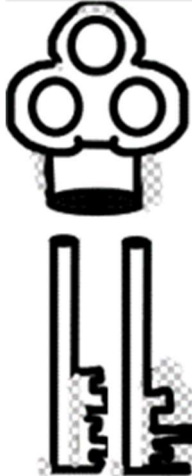
Encrusting rhinestones into live bugs was the new rage.

# 84

Down on his luck for a homeless man, things were starting to look up for Stephen. Everyone at the shelter knew him well. He spent his last penny on a bottle of booze to celebrate, some said.

So how did he end up in a trash compactor the next day?

## THE KEY



Sam finds a strange key under the rug of his apartment. Stranger still was that the key came apart. When he showed his next-door neighbor lady, she was curiously interested, and seemed to know too much about what Sam had. Yet, she was determined to protect him.

Sam's adventure is about to unfold....

The clickity-clack of her red stilettos sounded hollow upon the cold tile floor. But the heat of the freshly-baked brownie pan warmed her hands. Nervous, she was determined to make a good impression on this new boss today.



87

## UNDERGROUND

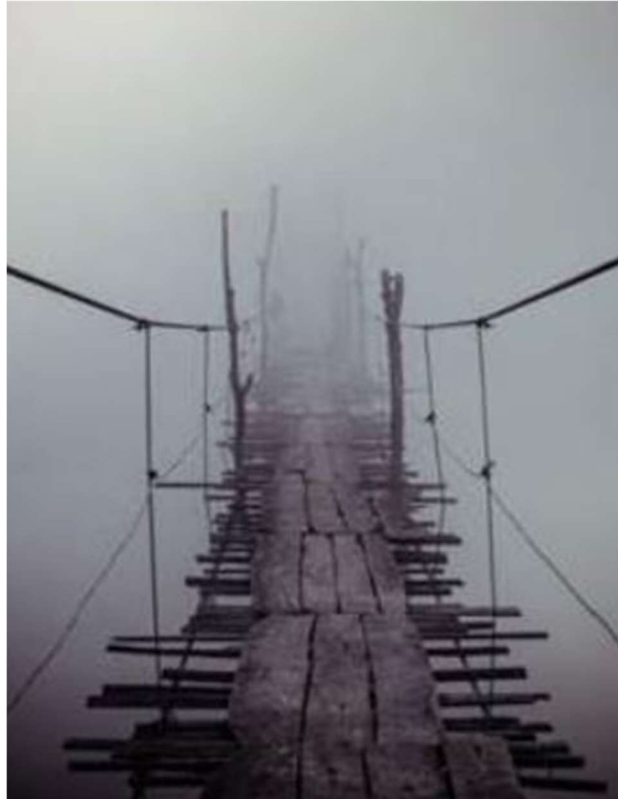


Rumor had it that it was once a safe house. But was it really? Or something far more nefarious?

No telling how much money had vanished. The book fest coordinators sipped their wine and made out signs on cardboard box tops. Registrants were handed a piece of paper and told to write their name on it for nametags. What kind of scam was this, the young author wondered. And will I ever get my money back?

89

## THE BRIDGE



## THE SMART TATTOO

“Revolutionary, they said. Epidural electronics respond to nonverbal commands as the tattoo is emblazoned over your vocal chords. The new patent will interrupt your thoughts before you even speak them.” Mark thought it was a great idea – at first.

91

## UNDER LOCK & KEY



92

## Treasure Hunters

Two ladies who love to go to estate sales find the one treasure of all time One buys a set of old dishes and find \$100 bills taped to the bottom of every plate.

## THE GLASS HEART

Mary found it in a thrift store, but what in the world was it?



94

## INFAMOUS BUTT DIAL

A robber in the middle of a heist unknowingly bumps his back-pocket phone against a table. It mysteriously dials 911 and the whole robbery was recorded.



95

## THE JOURNAL



I found it on the train.

96

## WRONG ADDRESS

Computer teacher Dorothy creates a bogus email list to teach a mail merge class. Testing it, she thinks all is fine. But when an old boyfriend responds, she turns inside-out. How did she accidentally use his old email? What would he think of her, still single at age forty?

97

## A NEW WORLD



George was consumed with circles. Everything he saw had some circle in it – the sun, a flower, a clock, his ring. “Eternal,” he’d say. “Never ending. Just like my love for you, Grady.”

Grady was enchanted at first, but then it became irritating. She was willing to do anything to get him to stop this obsession.

# 99



John noticed a fresh bouquet of roses laying in the gutter as he walked home that day. A little farther down, the diamond ring. He was determined to find the girl who left them there.

# 100

Returning from a summer rafting trip, you find the world is facing another deadly pandemic. When you arrive back home, you find that you and only a few others your age are still alive.



“One who travels in a purposeful manner toward a vague destination.”

You traverse each day a step at a time. You may only go this way once.

Where will your travels take you? Will you make it count?