

Twenty Stories for Enjoyment & Reflection



You may tell a tale that takes up residence in someone's soul,
becomes their blood and self and purpose. That tale will move them
and drive them and who knows what they might do because of it,
because of your words. That is your role, your gift.

(Erin Morgenstern)



1. A Love Story



Moses Mendelssohn

The German philosopher and scholar Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) was born a hunchback. Despite this deformity, which could have soured him on life forever, Mendelssohn achieved a maturity and wisdom few people ever do.

While on a trip to Hamburg as a young man, Mendelssohn met a rich merchant who had a beautiful young daughter, Frumtje. The young man fell hopelessly in love with her. She, too, was mature beyond her years, and despite his obvious physical defect, she was attracted to his gentleness, his charm, and his brilliant mind.

Mendelssohn stayed several weeks in Hamburg, spending much of his time with this lovely young woman he had fallen in love with at first sight. When it finally came time to leave, he worked up enough nerve to speak to her father. It was either that or lose her forever.

The rich and powerful merchant hesitated for a long time. Mendelssohn finally asked him to speak his thoughts frankly.

“Well,” said the older man, “you are known throughout Germany as a most brilliant young man. And yet . . . I must tell you my child was a bit frightened when she first saw you.”

“Because I am a hunchback?” Sadly, the merchant nodded.

Downcast, but not defeated, Mendelssohn asked only one last favor – the privilege of seeing her once more before he left. Admitted to her room, he found her busy with needlework. He spoke at first of various matters, then carefully and gradually, he led the conversation to the subject that was nearest to his heart. “Do you believe,” he asked, “that marriages are made in heaven?”

“Yes,” she said, “for that is our faith.”

“And it is true,” he said gently. “Now let me tell you about something strange that happened when I was born. As you know, at a child’s birth, according to our tradition, they call out in heaven that the birth has occurred. And when it is a boy, they announce, ‘Such-and-such boy will have this-or-that girl for a wife.’”

“Well, there I was, just born, and I heard the name of my future wife announced. At the same time, I heard the great far-off voice say, ‘unfortunately, the poor little girl, Frumtje, will have a terrible hump on her back.’ Quick as a flash, I cried out, ‘O Lord God, if a girl is hunchbacked, she will grow up bitter and hard. Please give her hump to me and let her develop into a well-formed, lovely, and charming young lady.’”

Mendelssohn waited for her reaction. Slowly, Frumtje looked up. She dropped her needlework, rose, and approached him with arms outstretched.

The merchant gave his consent and they were soon married, living a long and fruitful life together.



Frumtje Guggenheim Mendelssohn – 1737-1812

2. Couple Torn Apart By War Reunited Decades Later

Three days after their wedding, Anna Koslov kissed her husband Boris goodbye. A soldier in Russia's Red Army, he was set to rejoin his military unit. The young couple expected that they would be together again soon, ready to begin the joys of married life, and to raise a family together.

But when Boris returned home from his military expedition, he found the house cold and empty. When he called his wife's name, there was only the echo of his own voice. Anna was gone.

Under the brutal regime of Joseph Stalin, Anna and her family had been declared enemies of the state. Boris' new bride was sent into exile in the vast plains of Siberia, with no chance to contact her husband. He didn't even know if she was still alive.

"I threatened to commit suicide rather than go because I couldn't live without him," she told *The Telegraph*, "but in the end I was forced to go. It was the most miserable time of my life."

Boris spent years searching for his lost love, but never found a trace of her. Over the years, both Boris and Anna remarried other people, and had children. But they never forgot about one another: After Boris became a writer, he dedicated a book to Anna, the woman he had loved and lived with for a mere three nights.

As time went by, Boris and Anna's respective spouses passed away. In 2007, Anna, a lonely widow, went back to visit the old house where she and Boris had spent those precious few nights. Now an elderly woman, she wanted to pay tribute to the time they'd shared there, knowing that she would never see her husband again.

In a remarkable twist of fate, the town received another long-lost visitor on that very same day – an 80-year-old man who had come to lay flowers at his parents' gravestone. But when he caught sight of the woman across the road, he knew something else had drawn him there.

"I thought my eyes were playing games with me," Anna said. "I saw this familiar-looking man approaching me, his eyes gazing at me. My heart jumped. I knew it was him. I was crying with joy." It was Boris, the man she thought she'd lost for good 60 years ago.

"I ran up to her and said: 'My darling, I've been waiting for you for so long. My wife, my life...'" he said.

"I couldn't take my eyes off her. Yes, I had loved other women when we were separated. But she was the true love of my life."



3. Couple Married for 75 Years Pass Away on the Same Day

J.C. and Josie Cox got married on Christmas Day, 1932. It wasn't the most convenient time for a wedding, and they had some trouble getting someone to officiate the ceremony: "They went up to a pastor's door and knocked on the door," Lesha Grimm, one of the Cox's granddaughters, told WFAA. "He didn't marry them, so they went to another pastor's house."

Nonetheless, the young couple was determined to be together –and so they remained, inseparable through thick and thin, for 75 years.

The couple followed their impulsive wedding ceremony with a honeymoon trip to deliver a load of chickens to a farm. Though their relationship wasn't always the height of romance, their bond was awe-inspiring: The couple went through all of life's ups and downs together, living in the same two-bedroom house in Fort Worth, Texas, for over 50 years.

As J.C. and Josie grew older, their health began to suffer. Josie was losing her sight, and J.C. "couldn't hear real well," said Grimm. Luckily, J.C.'s deafness didn't cause much trouble for the couple: "He didn't talk much anyway," said Marla Williamson, another of the Cox's granddaughters. "His way of socializing with you was to share Dr Pepper."

When the aging couple entered a nursing home together last month, Josie insisted on caring for her husband just as she always had, despite her limitations. Religiously, she ironed his pants and shirts for him every day, so that he could dress the way he liked.

"She was going to make sure - even though he never went anywhere - his clothes were going to be starched," said Grimm.

Last week, J.C. died of complications from pneumonia. Josie lay in bed beside him, holding his hand as he slipped away.

Josie herself suffered from heart problems, and days earlier, doctors had said she didn't have long to live. It seemed like her beloved husband's death was too much for her to take: For five hours after his death, she lay in her bed, grieving and unable to move. Her grandchildren surrounded her.

"You know, Grannie, we're going to be OK," Williamson whispered in her ear. "Paw and your children are waiting for you. It's OK. You can leave." Moments later, Josie closed her eyes for the last time.

"When he passed away he didn't say a lot, but he went and she went with him," Grimm told *The Star Telegram*.

"To me, he was saying to her, 'C'mon, let's go.'"



4. The Beautiful Bride

One day, a young guy and a young girl fell in love. But the guy came from a poor family. The girl's parents weren't too happy.

So the young man decided not only to court the girl but to court her parents as well. In time, the parents saw that he was a good man and was worthy of their daughter's hand.

But there was another problem: The man was a soldier. Soon, war broke out and he was being sent overseas for a year. The week before he left, the man knelt on his knee and asked his lady love, "Will you marry me?" She wiped a tear, said yes, and they were engaged. They agreed that when he got back in one year, they would get married.

But tragedy struck. A few days after he left, the girl had a major vehicular accident. It was a head-on collision. When she woke up in the hospital, she saw her father and mother crying. Immediately, she knew there was something wrong.

She later found out that she suffered brain injury. The part of her brain that controlled her face muscles was damaged. Her once lovely face was now disfigured. She cried as she saw herself in the mirror. "Yesterday, I was beautiful. Today, I'm a monster." Her body was also covered with so many ugly wounds.

Right there and then, she decided to release her fiancé from their promise. She knew he wouldn't want her anymore. She would forget about him and never see him again.

For one year, the soldier wrote many letters—but she wouldn't answer. He phoned her many times but she wouldn't return his calls.

But after one year, the mother walked into her room and announced, "He's back from the war." The girl shouted, "No! Please don't tell him about me. Don't tell him I'm here!"

The mother said, "He's getting married," and handed her a wedding invitation. The girl's heart sank. She knew she still loved him—but she had to forget him now. With great sadness, she opened the wedding invitation. And then she saw her name on it! Confused, she asked, "What is this?"

That was when the young man entered her room with a bouquet of flowers. He knelt beside her and asked, "Will you marry me?" The girl covered her face with her hands and said, "I'm ugly!"

The man said, "Without your permission, your mother sent me your photos. When I saw your photos, I realized that nothing has changed. You're still the person I fell in love with. You're still as beautiful as ever, because I love you!"



5. Marriage: A Special Bond

When I got home that night as my wife served dinner, I held her hand and said, "I've got something to tell you." She sat down and ate quietly. Again I observed the hurt in her eyes. Suddenly I didn't know how to open my mouth. But I had to let her know what I was thinking: I want a divorce. I raised the topic calmly.

She didn't seem to be annoyed by my words, instead she asked me softly, why?

I avoided her question. This made her angry. She threw away the chopsticks and shouted at me, you are not a man! That night, we didn't talk to each other. She was weeping. I knew she wanted to find out what had happened to our marriage. But I could hardly give her a satisfactory answer; she had lost my heart to Jane. I didn't love her anymore. I just pitied her! With a deep sense of guilt, I drafted a divorce agreement which stated that she could own our house, our car, and 30% stake of my company.

She glanced at it and then tore it into pieces. The woman who had spent ten years of her life with me had become a stranger. I felt sorry for her wasted time, resources and energy but I could not take back what I had said for I loved Jane so dearly. Finally she cried loudly in front of me, which was what I had expected to see. To me her cry was actually a kind of release. The idea of divorce which had obsessed me for several weeks seemed to be firmer and clearer now.

The next day, I came back home very late and found her writing something at the table. I didn't have supper but went straight to sleep and fell asleep very fast because I was tired after an eventful day with Jane.

When I woke up, she was still there at the table writing. I just did not care so I turned over and was asleep again.

In the morning she presented her divorce conditions: she didn't want anything from me, but needed a month's notice before the divorce. She requested that in that one month we both struggle to live as normal a life as possible. Her reasons were simple: our son had his exams in a month's time and she didn't want to disrupt him with our broken marriage.

This was agreeable to me. But she had something more, she asked me to recall how I had carried her into our bridal room on our wedding day.

She requested that every day for the month's duration I carry her out of our bedroom to the front door every morning. I thought she was going crazy. Just to make our last days together bearable I accepted her odd request.

I told Jane about my wife's divorce conditions. She laughed loudly and thought it was absurd. No matter what tricks she applies, she has to face the divorce, she said scornfully.

My wife and I hadn't had any body contact since my divorce intention was explicitly expressed. So when I carried her out on the first day, we both appeared clumsy. Our son clapped behind us, "Daddy is holding mommy in his arms". His words brought me a sense of pain. From the bedroom to the sitting room, then to the door, I walked over ten meters with her in my arms. She closed her eyes and said softly, "Don't tell our son about the divorce." I nodded, feeling somewhat upset. I put her down outside the door. She went to wait for the bus to work. I drove alone to the office.

On the second day, both of us acted much more easily. She leaned on my chest. I could smell the fragrance of her blouse. I realized that I hadn't looked at this woman carefully for a long time. I realized she was not young any more. There were fine wrinkles on her face, her hair was graying! Our marriage had taken its toll on her. For a minute I wondered what I had done to her.

On the fourth day, when I lifted her up, I felt a sense of intimacy returning. This was the woman who had given ten years of her life to me.

On the fifth and sixth day, I realized that our sense of intimacy was growing again. I didn't tell Jane about this. It became easier to carry her as the month slipped by. Perhaps the everyday workout made me stronger.

She was choosing what to wear one morning. She tried on quite a few dresses but could not find a suitable one. Then she sighed, "All my dresses have grown bigger." I suddenly realized that she had grown so thin, that was the reason why I could carry her more easily.

Suddenly it hit me - she had buried so much pain and bitterness in her heart. I reached out and touched her head.

Our son came in at that moment and said, "Dad, it's time to carry mom out." To him, seeing his father carrying his mother out had become an essential part of his life. My wife gestured to our son to come closer and hugged him tightly. I turned my face away because I was afraid I might change my mind at this last minute. I then held her in my arms, walking from the bedroom, through the sitting room, to the hallway. Her hand surrounded my neck softly and naturally. I held her body tightly; it was just like our wedding day.

But her much lighter weight made me sad. On the last day, when I held her in my arms I could hardly move a step. Our son had gone to school. I held her tightly and said I hadn't noticed that our life lacked intimacy.

I drove to office and jumped out of the car swiftly without locking the door. I was afraid any delay would make me change my mind. I walked upstairs. Jane opened the door and I said to her, "Sorry, Jane, I do not want the divorce anymore."

She looked at me, astonished, and then touched my forehead. "Do you have a fever?" she said. I moved her hand off my head. "Sorry, Jane" I said, "I won't divorce my wife." My married life was boring probably because she and I didn't value the details of our lives, not because we didn't love each other anymore. Now I realized that since I carried her into my home on our wedding day I am supposed to hold her until death do us apart.

Jane seemed to suddenly wake up. She gave me a loud slap and then slammed the door and burst into tears. I walked downstairs and drove away.

At the floral shop on the way, I ordered a bouquet of flowers for my wife. The salesgirl asked me what to write on the card. I smiled and wrote, "I'll carry you out every morning until death do us apart."

That evening I arrived home, flowers in my hands, and a smile on my face. I run upstairs, only to find my wife in the bed – dead.

My wife had been fighting cancer for months and I was too busy with Jane to even notice. She knew that she would die soon, and she wanted to save me from the negative reaction our son was sure to have if we had gotten a divorce. At least, in the eyes of our son — I'm a loving husband.



What is the worst of woes that wait on age? What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?
To view each loved one blotted from life's page, and be alone on earth, as I am now.
(Lord Byron)



I am in the night.
There is a being who has gone away and carried the heavens with her.
(Victor Hugo)

6. This Is What Love Is

There is a true story of a wife whose husband had been in Japan during the war. In Japan he lived with a Japanese woman and had a couple of children with her. He loved the Japanese woman very much. When he came home he did not tell his wife about this love. But finally, when he knew he was dying, he confessed to her the truth of the relationship and the children. At first she was very upset. But then something within her began to stir, and she worked and worked with her anguished feelings; finally, before her husband died, she said, "I will take care of them." So she went to Japan, found the young woman, and brought her and the two children back to the United States. They made a home together and the wife did all she could to teach the young woman English, to get her a job, and to help with the children. That's what love is.



There is only one happiness in life, to love and be loved.
(George Sand)



Love means to commit oneself without guarantee, to give oneself completely in the hope that our love will produce love in the loved person. Love is an act of faith, and whoever is of little faith is also of little love.
(Erich Fromm)



Love is the power of God that binds two souls and makes them one;
there is no power on earth that can dissolve that bond.
(The Aquarian Gospel)



7. A Brother's Love

It happened just a few years ago to two young children in a family from Illinois. The eight year old daughter became ill and was diagnosed with a life-threatening blood disease. A search went out to find a donor of blood compatible with her own. As she weakened, they looked and no donor could be found.

Then it was discovered that her six year old brother shared her rare blood type. The mother and their minister and doctor sat down with the boy to ask if he would be willing to donate his blood to save the life of his sister.

Much to their surprise he did not answer right away. He wanted some time to think about it. Six year olds can be quite thoughtful at times. After a few days he went to his mother and said, "Yes, I'll do it."

The following day the doctor brought both children to his clinic and placed them on cots next to each other. He wanted them to see how one was helping the other. First he drew a half pint of blood from the young boy's arm. Then he moved it over to his sister's cot and inserted the needle so her brother could see the effect. In a few minutes color began to pour back into her cheeks.

Then the boy motioned for the doctor to come over. He wanted to ask a question, very quietly. "Will I start to die right away?" he asked.

You see, when he had been asked to donate his blood to save the life of his sister, his six year old mind understood the process literally. That's why he needed a few days to think about it.

And then he simply gave what is in the heart of every human being to give when we are truly connected.



8. Friendship

Once a rich man said he would divide his fortune among his friends, if only he knew who they were.

Years passed and the man died during a mid-winter blizzard. His last request was that his funeral be held at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Although scores had boasted of being his intimate friend, only three men and one woman turned out to stand in the freezing early morning beside his grave.

When the will was read, it directed that his estate be divided equally among those who attended his funeral.

9. A Story of Integrity

Some time ago, an article in *National Racquetball* magazine told the story of Reuben Gonzales, who was in the final match of a professional racquetball tournament. It was Gonzales' first shot at a victory on the pro circuit, and he was playing the perennial champion.

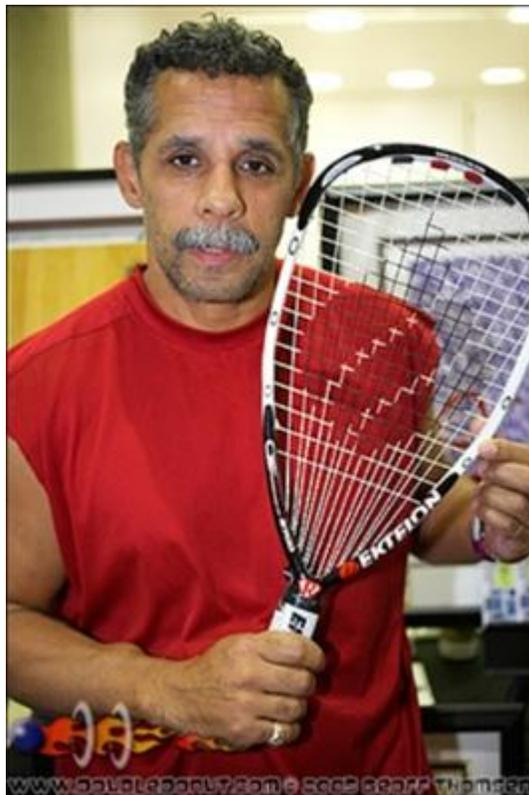
In the fourth and final game, at match point, Gonzales made a super "kill" shot into the front wall to win it all. The referee called it good. One of the two linesmen affirmed that the shot was in.

But Gonzales, after a moment's hesitation, turned around, shook his opponent's hand, and declared that his shot had "skipped" into the wall, hitting the court floor first. As a result, he lost the match. He walked off the court. Everybody was stunned.

The next issue of *National Racquetball* magazine displayed Reuben Gonzales on its front cover. The story searched for an explanation of this first-ever occurrence on the professional racquetball circuit.

Who could ever imagine it in any sport or endeavor? A player, with everything officially in his favor, with victory in his hand, disqualified himself at match point and lost!

When asked why he did it, Reuben said, "It was the only thing I could do to maintain my integrity."



Reuben Gonzales

10. A Very Special Seed

A successful businessman was growing old and knew it was time to choose a successor to take over the business. Instead of choosing one of his directors or his children, he decided to do something different. He called all the young executives in his company together.

He said, “It is time for me to step down and choose the next CEO. I have decided to choose one of you.” The young executives were shocked, but the boss continued, “I am going to give each one of you a seed today – one very special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it, and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next CEO.”

One man, named Jim, was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his wife the story. She helped him get a pot, soil and compost and he planted the seed. Everyday he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other executives began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow.

Jim kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew. Three weeks, four weeks, five weeks went by, still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants, but Jim didn’t have a plant and he felt like a failure.

Six months went by — still nothing in Jim’s pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Jim didn’t say anything to his colleagues, however, he just kept watering and fertilizing the soil. He so wanted the seed to grow.

A year went by and the CEO asked the young executives to bring their plants to work for inspection.

When Jim told his wife that he wasn’t going to take an empty pot, she asked him to be honest about what happened. Jim felt sick to his stomach, it was going to be the most embarrassing moment of his life, but he knew his wife was right. He took his empty pot to the board room.

When Jim arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other executives. They were beautiful – in all shapes and sizes. Jim put his empty pot on the floor and many of his colleagues laughed, a few felt sorry for him!

When the CEO arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted his young executives. Jim just tried to hide in the back. “My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown,” said the CEO. “Today one of you will be appointed the next CEO!”

All of a sudden, the CEO spotted Jim at the back of the room with his empty pot. He asked Jim to come to the front of the room. Jim was terrified. He thought, “The CEO knows I’m a failure! Maybe he will have me fired!”

When Jim got to the front, the CEO asked him what had happened to his seed. Jim told him the story. The CEO asked everyone to sit down except Jim. He looked at Jim, and then announced to the young executives, “Behold your next Chief Executive Officer — Jim!” Jim couldn’t believe it. Jim couldn’t even grow his seed. “How could he be the new CEO?” the others said.

Then the CEO said, “One year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds; they were dead – it was not possible for them to grow.

“All of you, except Jim, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you. Jim was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new Chief Executive Officer!”



11. A Fortuitous Encounter

A poor Scottish farmer was out walking one day when he heard a plaintive cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He ran to assist and found a boy mired almost to the waist in the black muck. Extending his staff, the farmer pulled the boy out.

The next day, a handsome team and carriage came up to the Scotsman’s small hut, and an elegantly dressed gentleman stepped out. He offered a reward to the Scotsman, who refused it.

Just then the farmer’s young son came to the door. Seeing him, the nobleman made the Scotsman an offer: “Let me take your son and give him a good education. If the lad is anything like his father, he’ll grow into a man you can be proud of.” The Scotsman liked this and shook hands on the bargain.

In time, the Scotsman’s son graduated from St. Mary’s Hospital Medical School, London. He later became Sir Alexander Fleming, the noted discover of penicillin.

Years later the nobleman’s son was stricken with pneumonia, but was saved through the use of penicillin. The nobleman was Lord Randolph Churchill, and the son was Winston Churchill.



12. Confidence

Most successful people are people who take risks – calculated risks – but nevertheless, risks.

Consider the case of the rising young executive who suddenly found himself unemployed when his company went through a downsizing.

When he asked “Why me?” the vice president, who was the young man’s superior, explained that he was too conservative in the way he did his job. “Things have gotten more competitive,” the VP explained. “Our people have to look at things from different angles and they have to take risks. And when they take risks, they have to believe they’ll succeed. That’s where you come up short.”

For six months the young man tried to get a job and failed. Then one day he met a retired circus tightrope walker. The two had something in common – time on their hands. Before long, the unemployed executive became an accomplished tightrope walker.

He became so good that he and his circus mentor were asked to participate in a televised charity event at Niagara Falls, and the young man invited his former boss to attend. “I’ll show him who can take risks,” he said.

All went well at the event. The young man successfully crossed the falls on the tightrope, followed by his circus mentor, who also pushed a wheelbarrow across. The vice president congratulated the young man and then dared him to cross over the falls again, this time pushing the wheelbarrow. “You can do it if you believe you can,” said the vice president.

“Do you believe I can?” the young man asked his former boss.

“Yes, I do,” the vice president replied.

“Okay,” said the young man, “get in the wheelbarrow.”



13. No Excuses

Albert Amateau, 105 years old, says he expected longevity. “I lived my life in such a way that I knew I would live beyond 100,” he explains.

Being an avid walker has always been part of his life. He was once examined by an incredulous physician, 50 years his junior, who was amazed to hear that Mr. Amateau walked four or five miles every day.

“What do you do when it rains?” asked the doctor.

“I put on a raincoat,” the old man replied.



14. A Second Performance?

Playwright George Bernard Shaw once wrote to Winston Churchill:

Dear Mr. Churchill:

Enclosed are two tickets to my new play, which opens Thursday night. Please come and bring a friend, if you have one.

Churchill sent back the following reply:

I am sorry, I have a previous engagement and cannot attend your opening. However, I will come to the second performance, if there is one.



15. Details

Joko-Sensei, a teacher at the Zen Center of San Diego, tells that one morning she was working putting finishing touches on a remodeled kitchen at the Zen Center of Los Angeles, when the teacher Maezumi-roshi walked in to see how things were going.

“Everything’s going fine,” she said, “There are only a few details to finish up.”

At this point the roshi scratched his head, “Only a few details?” he asked, looking puzzled. “But details are all there are.”



16. The Power of Prayer?

Diamond D's brothel began construction on an expansion of their building to increase their ever-growing business. In response, the local church across the street started a campaign to block the business from expanding with morning, afternoon, and evening prayer sessions at their church. Work on Diamond D's progressed right up until the week before the grand reopening when lightning struck the warehouse and burned it to the ground. After the brothel was burned to the ground by the lightning strike the church folks were rather smug in their outlook, bragging about the power of prayer.

But late last week Jill Diamond, the owner/madam, sued the church, the preacher and the entire congregation on the grounds that the church "was ultimately responsible for the demise of her building and her business -- either through direct or indirect divine actions or means."

In its reply to the court, the church vehemently and voraciously denied any and all responsibility or any connection to the building's demise.

The crusty old judge read through the plaintiff's complaint and the defendant's reply, and at the opening hearing he commented, "I don't know how the heck I'm going to decide this case, but it appears from the paperwork that we now have a whorehouse owner who staunchly believes in the power of prayer, and an entire church congregation that thinks it's all nonsense!"



17. Friends with the Devil

A candidate for city council was doing some door-to-door campaigning and things were going pretty well, he thought, until he came to the house of a grouchy-looking fellow. After the candidate's little speech, the fellow said, "Vote for you? Why I'd rather vote for the devil!"

"I understand," said the candidate. "But in case your friend is not running, may I count on your support?"



18. Laziness

Abraham Lincoln once took a sack of grain to a mill whose proprietor was known to be the laziest man in Illinois. After watching the miller for a while, the future president commented wearily, "I can eat that grain as fast as you're grinding it."

"Indeed," grunted the miller, "and how long do you think you could keep that up?"

"Until I starved to death," replied Lincoln.

19. Without Batting an Eye

During a time of civil war in Korea, a certain general led his troops through province after province, overrunning whatever stood in his path.

The people of one town, knowing that he was coming and having heard tales of his cruelty, all fled into the mountains.

The general arrived in the empty town with his troops and sent them out to search the town.

Some of the soldiers came back and reported that only one person remained, a Zen priest.

The general strode over to the temple, walked in, pulled out his sword, and said, "Don't you know who I am? I am the one who can run through you without batting an eye."

The Zen master looked back and calmly responded, "And I, sir, am one who can be run through without batting an eye." The general, hearing this, bowed and left.



20. Maybe

Once upon a time there was a Chinese farmer whose horse ran away, and all the neighbors came around to offer their sympathy that evening, saying, "So sorry to hear your horse has run away. That's too bad".

And the farmer said, "Maybe."

The next day the horse came back bringing seven wild horses with it and everybody came around that evening and said, "Oh, isn't that lucky! What a wonderful turn of events, you now have eight horses!"

And the farmer said, "Maybe."

The next day the farmer's son tried to break one of these horses to ride, but was thrown off and broke his leg. And all the neighbors came around and said, "Oh, dear, that's too bad."

And the farmer said, "Maybe."

The following day the conscription officers came around to draft people into the army and they rejected his son because he had a broken leg.

All the people came around again and said, "Isn't that just great!"

And the farmer said, "Maybe."



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The people of one town, knowing that he was coming and having heard tales of his cruelty, all fled into the mountains.

The general arrived in the empty town with his troops and sent them out to search the town.

Some of the soldiers came back and reported that only one person remained, a Zen priest.

The general strode over to the temple, walked in, pulled out his sword, and said, "Don't you know who I am? I am the one who can run through you without batting an eye."

The Zen master looked back and calmly responded, "And I, sir, am one who can be run through without batting an eye." The general, hearing this, bowed and left.



20. Maybe

Once upon a time there was a Chinese farmer whose horse ran away, and all the neighbors came around to offer their sympathy that evening, saying, "So sorry to hear your horse has run away. That's too bad".

And the farmer said, "Maybe."

The next day the horse came back bringing seven wild horses with it and everybody came around that evening and said, "Oh, isn't that lucky! What a wonderful turn of events, you now have eight horses!"

And the farmer said, "Maybe."

The next day the farmer's son tried to break one of these horses to ride, but was thrown off and broke his leg. And all the neighbors came around and said, "Oh, dear, that's too bad."

And the farmer said, "Maybe."

The following day the conscription officers came around to draft people into the army and they rejected his son because he had a broken leg.

All the people came around again and said, "Isn't that just great!"

And the farmer said, "Maybe."





May your soul be happy;
journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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