

Write a story that opens with one of the following beginnings and ends with one of the endings.

STORY BEGINNINGS

1. "If only those damn birds would shut up for a minute!"
2. Someone was screaming again from that decrepit old house on the cul-de-sac.
3. He has like a hundred dollars in parking tickets, so he decides to --
4. The book seemed to fall open to the page about the candle, almost deliberately, like it was trying to tell us something.
5. The girl had a peace sign on her forehead, drawn in bright magenta lipstick, balanced by pale, smiling lips.
6. The mind works wondrously fast when a car going the wrong way on a one way street at 70 miles per hour is headed for you.
7. "Lady," he said slowly, "you walk great. You should TEACH walking."
8. When someone suddenly looks different, very different, the inclination is to say "you've changed your hair," or "you've lost weight."
9. "Forgive me," he/she said, but it might as well have been a sneeze for all she/he cared.
10. Having an imaginary friend means never having to say "I'm lonely."
11. It was one of those dreams that would have given Salvador Dali a nightmare.
12. How late is too late for a lunch date you've waited your entire life for?
13. It was clearly meant as a gift--much like when a cat brings in a dead bird or a child holds open for your selection a handful of melted M&M's.
14. You can never underestimate the intelligence of someone who gets his environmental statistics from Mobil advertisements.
16. Understandably, my parents were upset when I told them I had changed my name to Eli.
17. "Dahling, you look mah-velous," he said hopelessly.
18. "I tied him to the dog," she said, "and the dog to the cat. And my brother --"

STORY ENDINGS

1. Just because it's impossible doesn't mean it's out of the question.
2. Looked like rain--again.
3. "Do me a favor," she (he) said with a slow smile. "Don't."
4. And when I (he/she) opened up the vacuum cleaner bag, it was full of those stupid pushpins--can you beat that?
5. Nobody ever complained after that.
6. So she/he opened the cage and let it just fly (run) away.
7. "It has something to do," she/he said "with the ozone layer. But I forget what."
8. There's a button you press on the computer that can make it all disappear.
9. Through the lens of the camera, for just a second she/he looked like _____.
10. When the wind comes up like that, it kind of takes you back, you know?
11. Later, when they had the time, they reconsidered.
12. And a painting of Elvis on black velvet.
13. Try doing THAT for a living!
14. "Hey, buddy," he said, "no problem."
15. And she/he signed it as if it were a work of art, and I sold it for \$15 at a yard sale.
16. And I'll be damned if there weren't lipstick stains on the napkin.
17. And he had that Jack Nicholson "Shining" look in his eyes.
18. I'll believe it when I see it in The Enquirer.
19. It's a cheap trick. But it always works.

JUDITH PRAGER / HARRY YOUTT
<http://www.url-der.org>
imaginehy@yahoo.com