



40 Stories

(of 40 words each)

Simon John Parkin

40
Stories

(of 40 words each)

Simon John Parkin

*For everyone who helped me
complete my 40 challenges this
year, especially Helen.*

First published in 2014 by

wildings
PRESS

© Simon John Parkin 2014
simon@ethicalgraphicdesign.co.uk

On turning 40, Jonathan had an idea: he would learn to levitate.

His friends laughed when they saw him practicing in the park – arms folded, lips pursed – but when he glided past their windows at night they cheered: “Wayhey Jonny!”

The man who toppled the government did so by comparing David Cameron's face to a slapped arse.

His comment struck a chord.

From then on, whenever the Prime Minister made speeches, people pulled their trousers down and smacked their behinds.

Every night, after Ellie fell asleep, Sam would gently pull back their duvet, raise his bare feet up and hold the moon back from crashing into the Earth. It was the only way he could keep her from being squashed.

Simon went to bed, read for a while then turned off the light, closed his eyes and gently sank into a woozy sleep. It was about eight or nine the next morning when he woke up.

Then he woke up.

James tied long planks of wood to Sandra's legs at night. He didn't want to hurt her but he knew that a woman bending her knees up against him in bed was a sign that she would soon leave him.

Of all the horses that strayed in the fields behind his house, the white one was Timothy's favourite. He patted it in front of his neighbours.

"Is that your horse?" they said.

It turned round and casually bit his stomach.

The record shop owner made Mark work in the dusty basement, stamping on the floor whenever he needed him.

It was all since he had snapped at a customer when they insisted James Taylor wrote the Starsky and Hutch theme.

David's answer came 6.8 seconds too late for his girlfriend when she asked him why he loved her.

When the inevitable question came from his next girlfriend, he handed her a folder marked 'why' but she said she felt queasy.

Rob loved plants so much that he stole them from people's gardens.

One night he arrived home ecstatic. "Look what I've just nicked!" he yelled, beaming from behind an enormous monkey puzzle, roots dripping soil on to the soft carpet.

Tom had recurring dreams about theme parks.

He didn't dream of the ups and downs and sharp turns of the rollercoaster. Instead he was always stuck in an endless queue, watching other people, hands over their heads, squealing with excitement.

Rebecca ate cheese before bed every night to facilitate better dreams.

By night she would ride an oleaginous wave of subconscious light and possibilities.

She ate so much cheese that her dreams began to melt like mozzarella into waking life.

Garry was halfway through a sentence when he realised he didn't know what he was saying. Words seemed to tumble from his mouth like rocks on mountains. It sounded like a foreign language.

His lips closed and never opened again.

Still in slippers, Alex opened his bank statement. It read like a particularly critical biography, his failures written in red. He skimmed it then filed it away in the hope that he could forget that particular chapter of his life.

Still in some pain, Samantha passed an open window whilst being wheeled back to her ward. The sky was green and frogs were jumping inside.

“Does this always happen?” she asked the nurse.

“Yes,” he replied “but it’ll soon pass.”

Jason placed his new forklift truck, now snapped in two, into his dad’s hands.

“Jason, I told you to be gentle!” he admonished, but inside he ached to be Superman so he could fly back to when it wasn’t broken.

Mooch was a self-styled culture jammer. He asked a sales assistant in PC World how to print barcodes. He was going to stick them on packets of meat in the supermarket. “It’ll really screw their systems up” he said.

The queen sat on the toilet but she could hear her butler waiting outside.

The proletariat insisted that ‘even the queen goes to the toilet,’ but it was like they were *all* listening outside the door. She held it in.

“I’m surprised you haven’t noticed that before,” Joe’s girlfriend said as she pointed out two specks of dust and a cobweb in a vague facial arrangement on his bedside wall. Its gaping maw kept him awake every night afterwards.

Three art students emptied a bucket of paper cranes on the pavement and stamped on them one by one.

From the small crowd that had gathered, a woman approached squeezing her daughter’s hand: “Could we have one of those please?”

Tony saw in shapes. To him, everything was smooth with sharp edges. Streets looked like Lego and people like the characters from the Money for Nothing video.

He obsessed over newspaper crosswords in which he found ecstasy in their pure geometry.

To facilitate good sleeping habits, Geoff developed bedtime rituals.

His routine began to eat into his day – his lunch hour was spent brushing teeth, he had warm milk for breakfast – until he had to pencil his sleep into a diary.

The rainbow belted colour
down on the awe-struck, rain-
sodden, family.

A passerby said: “Richard Of
York Gave Battle In Vain.
That’s how you remember the
colours of a rainbow.”

The rainbow shattered and
fell to Earth like glass.

Claudia’s bicycle was hit by
lightning while leaning against
a lamppost.

Afterwards she called it Flash.
It didn’t go any faster, but on
summer evenings you could
almost sense it fizz with
impatience as it boomed down
sultry country lanes.

'I'm god thanks', God typed by mistake in answer to a friend's email, and suddenly, He believed it.

He performed some miracles and even garnered disciples.

By the time God remembered it was just a mistake, it was too late.

Arthur became a billionaire by claiming he invented buildings.

He noticed that nobody had ever patented buildings and filed a retro-lawsuit on the owner of every one.

His expense of lawyers are now considering suing every council with pavements.

Isabelle finally cracked.

With suitcase packed she left a note on the kitchen table.

As she looked for her keys, the phone rang. The plumber had a cancellation. Could she be in between nine and one?

She sat and waited.

They met on a zebra crossing, him in white daps, her in black flats.

They commented on the strobing of each others shoes on the black and white stripes and struck up a conversation on the merits of sensible footwear.

Reading *Healing Your Inner Zen* raised Margaret to a higher plane.

She would stop people mid-sentence and ask them why they were punishing her with their presence.

When confronted about her apparent rudeness, she thanked them for the compliment.

On Paul's birthday, his wife handed him her present.

"What is it?" he smiled and turned it around.

"Open it and see" she said with an apologetic look.

It was a book. On the cover it said 'Cooking for One'.

Southery, just off the A10 in Norfolk, was inexplicably windy.

Meteorologists were dumbfounded until they traced the gusts to a woman on Upgate Street.

They knocked on her door.

She opened it and sighed so forcibly their white coats billowed.

Carly span her father's handcrafted, marble, floorstanding globe to decide where she would travel that summer.

She jabbed her finger down, the base broke, the globe smashed on to her foot and she spent the next three months in traction.

The zebra crossing beeped at the same frequency as Ryan's footsteps and the whine of a moped harmonised with a nearby extractor fan. Buildings crumpled and he fell into the ground while all around people just carried on as normal.

They played darts like nothing was wrong. Kyle even laughed when Emma made one of her classic excuses for why she had missed the dartboard.

The shared pint helped but when they left they remembered the bitterly cold air outside.

The police arrested Sophie for stealing make-up from Boots.

She thought the ring she had been wearing lately had made her invisible but it turned out that since she had been married people just didn't notice her any more.

“Dad,” Oscar said, “I’ve invented a time machine!” and he nudged his son from behind his knees.

The grandad looked down, recognised his own smile in the boy and instantly travelled back 70 years to hold his dad’s enormous hand.

“Hello,” the woman at the door said, “I brought you that meringue, like you asked.”

Dylan stared at her blankly.

“You know... the morse code signal.”

He hadn't the heart to tell her his bedroom light was on the blink.

As Blarg walked down the street he noticed an alien with six earlobes. His first thought was: ‘What a weirdo,’ until he remembered that he also had six earlobes and any illusion he had that people weren't staring was shattered.

At 19, Billy was flattered when Marsha asked him favours and would happily have emptied his bank account had she smiled sweetly.

20 years later, he wouldn't, and he wasn't sure if it was he who had changed or Marsha.

You wouldn't know it, but Mr Bossington has saved your life countless times.

He spends his days driving back and forth past accident hotspots, very slowly, so there are no more crashes.

The funny thing is, nobody *ever* thanks him.

“He stopped and said ‘An end is always a new beginning’ as he left me for that floozy. So I slammed his fingers in the door. ‘Well at least that’s the end of you being a wanker for a while.’”

wildings
PRESS