

Welcome to *50 at 50*. Seeing a blog comment not long ago made me wonder if I could do what they suggested - write ultra-short fiction. This is the result, fifty short stories, each no more than fifty words long. I hope you enjoy them, and, please, tell me what you think.

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Email is would be best: [pw6163@gmail.com](mailto:pw6163@gmail.com)

Thanks. Paul

**1** *She walked along the darkening hall, heels clicking, hips swaying. Mustiness followed, clinging to walls and deadening sounds. Her pace quickened, skin prickling, dark pooling as she opened the door to the stairs. It flowed after, catching her heel as she stepped down. The closing door cut off her scream.*

⇒⇐

**2** *After she died, he saw her face everywhere. Framed in moonlight or momentarily in a crowd. She struggled to speak, but he was deaf to her. When she appeared again it was close enough to touch, so he pushed forward. The train caught his shoulder and she was with him.*

⇒⇐

**3** *He saw the door but no-one else did. His mistake was telling others, trying to convince. Eventually, scared for him, they locked him up. Soft edges, soft sounds and soft walls but the door was behind the softness. His fingers broke getting to it. Bathed in light, he stepped through.*

⇒⇐

**4** *My feet slick from sweat, the rough stone steps seemed endless. I slipped, but hands supported and helped me to the top. Tired, I lay back, uncomfortable but gently held. A figure blocked the sun, hands raised. The jade knife descended. There was pain and darkness.*

⇒⇐

**5** *I drive a tower crane perched above the tallest buildings in the city, the smog and noise all below me. They wonder how I work ten hours at a stretch up here without human contact. I despise them and after lunch open my flay and make gentle falling rain.*

⇒⇐

**6** *Cleaning highrise glass I've seen it all. Love, hate, anger and lust played out for God and for me. The books I could write! The blackmail letters. Paypal is my anonymous friend, although I may get bored when I retire, rich.*

⇒⇐

**7** *It was boring, even here amongst my peers, all evenly matched and equally competitive. Our technology gave us everything except satisfaction and happiness, so our creativity faded as we stagnated and seldom left our homes. Then one day the least of us spoke, "Let There Be Light".*

⇒⇐

**8** *Scrambling up the last rock I stood on the summit looking over a dark valley, wreathed in cloud, beathing heavily from exertion and altitude. A few minutes more .. I watched the horizon eagerly, then with a flash of gold the sun rose and warmth flooded my face.*

⇒⇐

**9** *You always remember your first. The excitement, the advice before and the congratulations after, the thrill of the chase and the wonder that it really was so beautiful. The sharp, in-drawn breath and the warmth of fresh blood from a gushing vein.*



**10** *The discomfort of a full bladder intrudes as you stare, eyes itching, your fingers clattering on keys. You hunch, scarcely breathing, concentrating on pixels, willing them to tell the right story. Muscles tense and hands move faster, then you relax suddenly. The dragon is dead and the gold is yours.*



**11** *He was young, adrenaline keeping his foot on the floor in the stolen Audi, cornering hard, engine and tyres screaming, climbing the mountain road. Traction failed on the final corner, car bouncing off rocks to dangle over a precipice. Shaken, he opened the door and fell screaming to the valley.*

⇒⇐

**12** *We crept in the shadows weighed down by our burden making for the gentleman's house, to the servants door as ordered. Being short, Ned staggered as we shuffled to the cellar, dropping our bundle on an old scarred table. This one an old woman, freshly dead. Money changed hands.*

⇒⇐

**13** *I was blindfolded, unable to move, but I felt her lips and breath on my neck, her fingers drifting lightly down my inner arm. She alternated lips, fingernails and ice, stopping when my breath grew ragged. To start again when I calmed down, then stop. Then ... ahh!*

⇒⇐

**14** *He stood on the edge, camera in hand framing another shot, capturing the lava shooting high above him. He was famous for taking risks and for the photographs, for ignorng the heat melting his shoes. An explosion took ground to his left, too close. He turned and began to run.*

⇒⇐

**15** *Dust fell from the ceiling as the room shook. Even under a mile of rock the impact was unmistakable. The men avoided looking at him or the wall display showing damage. The button was in front of him, if he pushed it the world would die. Reaching forward, he cried.*

⇒⇐

**16** *An hour ago the ground shook, tall buildings fell and now I'm looking for my wife under smashed concrete. Over cries and sounds of collapsing walls there's a growing roar. I look out to sea and see a wall of water higher than the trees. I sink to my knees.*



**17** *For a bet I'm in this mausoleum amongst stone coffins in the dark and cold with rats and the dead. I jump at every small sound, heart hammering. A new sound, stone on stone and my eyes strain. Something against my cheek makes me scream, lunge, trip and fall unconscious.*

⇒⇐

**18** *Fifteen meters above the sea on a rock ledge I waited, timing the waves. I'd only be safe if I hit the crest, the trough would kill me. I leapt, arms flailing and forgot to breathe. An age later I surfaced, spluttering and felt like cheering. I could do anything.*



**19** *The lander bounced a little as it touched down, settling as the vibration stopped. After the cheers and congratulations we opened the hatch, back on the moon fifty years and a thousand miles from Apollo. Stepping down and planting the flag I looked round, nearby footprints, heading towards the ridge.*

⇒⇐

**20** *The heartattack was massive, terminal and hugely painful. As the pain and sounds faded into soft, warm silence, out of the surrounding darkness came a voiceless question - "Tell me what kind of man you were".*

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**21** *He leapt from the open door, arms and legs bent facing the distant ground. The wind noise grew and he made out buildings, then trees. He tugged the metal ring against his chest, but it wouldn't move, then again and again. He screamed as the ground came to meet him.*

⇒⇐

**22** *He sat on his board looking behind, waiting for the right wave to build beneath him. This one! He lay down and paddled, then knelt as a grey shape rose, huge teeth biting the front of the board. Out of control he spun through the surf, shaken, missing a finger.*

⇒⇐

**23** *He woke from a fading dream, sweating, heart pounding with his girlfriend there holding him. Her face changed, jaws crushed his windpipe. He woke, sweating, heart racing and she was there. Jaws crushed his neck and he woke screaming to see her leaning over him.*

⇒⇐

**24** *They caught him and strapped him immoveably to a nearby fence, guns pointed. Tentatively a uniformed figure forced open his mouth and rubbed a swab over his gums, putting it into a small tube. Shaking it fiercely, they all watched as the liquid turned green. "He's human. Let him go."*

⇒⇐

**25** *He \*would\* tell the truth, no-one was going to stop him. This time his newsletter would break the news, tell everyone what he'd seen. There would be disbelief, but there was proof. He typed slowly - "Last night, the karaoke competition was won by Elvis, older but still the King."*

⇒⇐

**26** *Clothes and faces blackened, the team crept to the tree-line and waited. The terrorist would emerge promptly as he had every night, then it would be over. A distant door opened, a figure appeared, staggered and fell. The team moved back into the trees as the accountant lay dead.*

⇒⇐

**27** *He woke to noise and smell, morning in the space station. But no voices. Floating through the six modules there was no-one, no suits. Huston didn't answer, the radio was dead and he started to panic. Passing over Europe at night there were no lights. Where was everyone?*

⇒⇐

**28** *Lying in a tent, semi-conscious and coughing up blood he barely recognised the exhausted aid-worker. A carelessly dropped blood sample in Frankfurt had helped spread the disease and if you survived a day, you were safe. In a month seven billion were dead, a year later the world was quiet.*

⇒⇐

**29** *He lay in the dust, arm trapped under the battered grey bomb casing, hoping that Allah would forgive him not facing the Holy Shrine when he prayed. A drone circled far overhead as in Nevada the pilot received permission. A finger movement launched a missile and the man died.*



**30** *Eventually he got through the overgrown trees and was inside the temple. He brushed dust from the carvings and read their story moving along the wall uncovering inset small gems. They got larger to his right and he followed almost running. Suddenly the floor tipped and he fell into darkness.*

⇒⇐

**31** *Blood on fire with the drug he lashed out at the girl in front of him, knocking her back against the plate glass. Furious that she still stood he punched hard but she stepped aside and both fist and glass broke, the shards tearing veins and tendons.*



**32** *The stegasaurus watched the incomprehensible light crossing the sky then pushed on towards the distant trees. There was a noise that kept getting louder as the ground shook, trees and the nearby cliff collapsed. Small mammals ran from the growing heat as trees burst into flame and rocks fell.*

⇒⇐

**33** *The motorbike leaned over, footrest scraping the road, sparks flying, as he hunched low over the tank, wind in his hair. On the last bend he almost lost it but fought for control pulling up on the grass beside the road. He punched the air, grinning. He'd buy this one.*



**34** *She walked ahead of him to the distant hills over endless sand and occasional rocks, both of them in a heat induced daydream. He heard her call, up to her knees in darker sand, sinking as she struggled. Then there was only her hand as he stumbled closer. Then nothing.*

⇒⇐

**35** *She had her back to him, hour-glass figure, smooth skin and long flowing hair. Surreptitiously, he watched her graceful movements over his beer, the flick of her hair. When her friends left, he'd go over, and eventually they did. As he stood, she turned, beard framing a smile.*

⇒⇐

**36** *The storm was fierce, waves threatening to swamp the small boat as he struggled to control the sails. There was a loud "crack" and he watched disbelieving as the mast fell. He moved, but tangled ropes held his arm, trapping him inches away from the emergency beacon.*



**37** *The tank stood upright, was filled with a pale blue liquid and held a hairless naked female body supported under the arms. She was attached to lots of leads and fewer tubes, head down, eyes closed. Suddenly her eyes opened with a look of terror as the alarm started.*



**38** *It was dusk and I was driving down south where the Kari trees come right down to the road. I slowed as I saw the bubble, growing to a meter across before vanishing leaving an almost human shape arm raised pitifully. I accelerated past, "God not another one."*



**39** *He'd hidden in the bushes watching her get ready for bed, fantasising and afraid. Tonight the white powder gave him courage as did the knife in his pocket and he'd show her, she'd understand. As her light went out the kitchen door gave. He moved silently to her room.*

⇒⇐

**40** *She was late for the job interview, rushing through the city. Not quite running, but walking quickly and, she thought, efficiently. Dodging pedestrians, courier bikes and trams, mentally counting the minutes. Stepping out behind a bus and looking right, the UPS truck had nowhere to go. She missed the appointment.*

⇒⇐

**41** *Faceplate blackened against the light he waited. It would take minutes to go back 70 million years and he'd have thirty minutes to look round and never, ever move from the spot. Darkness cleared and heat from the lava made him stumble and fall away from any hope of return.*

⇒⇐

**42** *It hunted the darkened city usually taking stray dogs, but tonight it needed more, a bigger life. It rejected the diseased and broken, and was scared by too much light but there in the shadow, waiting nervously. Perhaps that one. It moved closer, "Hey girl, how much?"*

⇒⇐

**43** *Four women, naked in the moonlight chanting at compass points around a low fire under a full moon, concentrating on an image in their minds. The trees bent back and the fire brightened and vanished leaving them still and silent. They felt something stir far beneath them, waking. Angry.*



**44** *He was rushing to get home, slightly over the speed limit, weaving skillfully through the motorway traffic. As he closed with the truck the rear tyre blew and the trailer slewed into him, jack-knifing, trapping him. Steel split and milk drove the windscreen into his face, filling his car.*

⇒⇐

**45** *He remembered the party and a girl with spiked red hair and an amazing smile. Later, leaving, kissing her and the walk back to her place. Headache, he needed panadol. Turning to ask he smelled then saw the blood, dead eyes reproachfully watching from the pillow.*



**46** *He'd argued with his wife and drunk a bottle of wine. Now he was walking round the top deck of the cruise ship, angry, convincing himself it was all her fault. Staggering, he hit his head and blacked out. He never felt the hands lifting him over the side.*

⇒⇐

**47** *The short walk exhausted him, but he sat letting the grey dust drift slowly through the suit's glove, watching Earth rise over the crater rim. The stale air made his head ache, but he wanted this to be his last sight. He knew they'd come back eventually, but too late.*



**48** *Standing on the gantry facing steel doors while static made his hair stand up, a whine in the background and his mouth going dry. The doors rolled back and there was a shining grey circle on the wall. He stepped carefully through, straightened and looked round. A volcano! It worked.*

⇒⇐

**49** *Sailing across the Pacific, watching the full moon high above the horizon, he was at peace with the world. Suddenly, the moon brightened and vanished completely leaving the stars visible. Stunned, he waited for the punch line, but it never came.*



**50** *After a long crawl, I stood in the cavern, breathing deeply my torch failing to reach the ceiling. The cave looked alive as rock filigrees made the shadows dance. A crouching, impossible woman moved with the beam, eyes glinting. When the light moved back, she really was gone.*

