Story ideas - three elements

Choose a set of three elements and write a story that contains all three of them! Extreme challenge: combine three of the elements with one of the other short story ideas on this page.

1. A stolen ring, fear of spiders, and a sinister stranger.
2. A taxi, an old enemy, and Valentine's Day.
3. Identical twins, a party invitation, and a locked closet.
4. A broken wristwatch, peppermints, and a hug that goes too far.
5. Aerobics, a secret diary, and something unpleasant under the bed.
6. An ex-boyfriend, a pair of binoculars, and a good-luck charm.
7. An annoying boss, a bikini, and a fake illness.
8. The first day of school, a love note, and a recipe with a significant mistake.
9. A horoscope, makeup, and a missing tooth.
10. A campfire, a scream, and a small lie that gets bigger and bigger.

More short story ideas

11. A babysitter is snooping around her employer's house and finds a disturbing photograph...
12. At a Chinese restaurant, your character opens his fortune cookie and reads the following message: "Your life is in danger. Say nothing to anyone. You must leave the city immediately and never return. Repeat: say nothing."...
13. Your character's boss invites her and her husband to dinner. Your character wants to make a good impression, but her husband has a tendency to drink too much and say exactly what's on his mind...
14. It's your character's first day at a new school. He or she wants to get a fresh start, develop a new identity. But in his or her homeroom, your character encounters a kid he or she knows from summer camp...

15. Your character has to tell his parents that he's getting a divorce. He knows his parents will take his wife's side, and he is right...

16. At the airport, a stranger offers your character money to carry a mysterious package onto the plane. The stranger assures your character that it's nothing illegal and points out that it has already been through the security check. Your character has serious doubts, but needs the money, and therefore agrees...

17. Your character suspects her husband is having an affair and decides to spy on him. What she discovers is not what she was expecting...

18. A man elbows your character in a crowd. After he is gone, she discovers her cell phone is too. She calls her own number, and the man answers. She explains that the cell phone has personal information on it and asks the man to send it back to her. He hangs up. Instead of going to the police, your character decides to take matters into her own hands...

19. After your character loses his job, he is home during the day. That's how he discovers that his teenage son has a small marijuana plantation behind the garage. Your character confronts his son, who, instead of acting repentant, explains to your character exactly how much money he is making from the marijuana and tries to persuade your character to join in the business...

20. At a garage sale, your character buys an antique urn which she thinks will look nice decorating her bookcase. But when she gets home, she realizes there are someone's ashes in it....

**Even more short story ideas**

21. Your character starts receiving flowers and anonymous gifts. She doesn't know who is sending them. Her husband is suspicious, and the gifts begin to get stranger....

22. A missionary visits your character's house and attempts to convert her to his religion. Your character is trying to get rid of him just as storm warning sirens go off. Your character feels she can't send the missionary out into the storm, so she lets him come down into her basement with her. This is going to be a long storm....
23. Your character is caught shoplifting. The shop owner says that she won't call the police in exchange for a personal favor....

24. Your character is visiting his parents over a holiday. He is returning some books to the library for his mother and is startled to notice that the librarian looks exactly like him, only about thirty years older. He immediately begins to suspect that his mother had an affair at one time and the librarian is his real father...

25. Your character picks up a hitch-hiker on her way home from work. The hitch-hiker tries to persuade your character to leave everything and drive her across the country...

26. Your character has to sell the house where she grew up. A potential buyer comes to look at it and begins to talk about all of the changes she would make to the place. This upsets your character, who decides she wants to find a buyer who will leave everything the way it has always been....

27. A bat gets in the house. Your character's husband becomes hysterical, frightened that it might be rabid. In his panic, he ends up shutting the bat in a room with your character while he calls an exterminator from a safe place in the house. His behavior makes your character see her husband in a new way....

28. Your character changes jobs in order to have more time with his family. But his family doesn't seem interested in having him around...

29. Your character develops the idea that she can hear the voices of the dead on a certain radio channel. She decides to take advantage of this channel to find answers to some questions that are bothering her about her dead parents....

30. Your character's dream is to be a professional dancer. At a party, she mentions this dream to a stranger, who says that he has contacts in the dance world and gets her an audition for a prestigious dance troupe. One problem: your character doesn't know how to dance. Your character decides to accept the audition anyway and look for a solution....

And still more short story ideas

31. Your character thinks her boss is looking for an excuse to fire her. She decides to fight back....

32. Your character goes out for dinner on a date and becomes attracted to the waiter or waitress....

33. Your character notices that a stranger is following her. She pretends not to notice. The stranger follows her home and watches her go inside. Then when he leaves, your character turns the tables and starts to follow him....
34. A child moves into a new house and finds out that the other kids in town think it's haunted. She begins to invent ghost stories to tell at school in order to get attention. But the more stories she tells, the more frightened she becomes of the house...

35. Your elderly character escapes from the retirement home where his or her children have placed him or her....

36. Your character gets cosmetic surgery in an attempt to make her boyfriend love her more. But then she worries he only loves her for her looks....

37. Your character is a writer. But his new neighbors are so noisy that he can neither work nor sleep. He decides to take action....

38. Your character's mother-in-law comes to visit for a week, and your character suspects she is trying to poison him. He shares his suspicion with his wife, who says he's always hated her mother but this accusation is going too far. Meanwhile, your character has stomach cramps, and his mother-in-law is downstairs making breakfast again....

39. It's a freezing cold night. Your character finds a homeless family on his doorstep and invites them into his home to sleep. But in the morning, the family doesn't leave....

40. Your character has recently married a man with two teenage children. The children resent her, and she tries to avoid them altogether. Then her new husband (their father) disappears suddenly, leaving only a short good-bye note....

Short story ideas - personal creative writing challenges

41. Make a list of five things you're afraid of happening to you. Then write a story in which one of them happens to your character..

42. Think of a big problem that one of your friends had to face. Then write a story in which your character battles with that problem..

43. What is one of your bad habits? Invent a character who has the bad habit, but a much worse case of it than you have. Write a story where this habit gets your character into trouble.

44. What is one of your greatest strengths? Invent a character who doesn't have this strength. Create a situation in which having this strength is very important for your character. What does your character do? Write the story.
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