



## Lateral Thinking

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1. A man lives on the twelfth floor of an apartment building. Every morning he takes the elevator down to the lobby and leaves the building. In the evening, he gets into the elevator, and, if there is someone else in the elevator -- or if it was raining that day -- he goes back to his floor directly. Otherwise, he goes to the tenth floor and walks up two flights of stairs to his apartment.

Sol: The man is a midget. He can't reach the upper elevator buttons, but he can ask people to push them for him. He can also push them with his umbrella.

2. In the middle of the ocean is a yacht. Several corpses are floating in the water nearby.

Sol1: A group of people were on an ocean voyage in a yacht. One day, they decided to go swimming -- they put on their swimsuits and dove off the side. They discovered belatedly that they have forgotten to put a ladder down the side of the yacht and were unable to climb back in, so they drowned.

Sol2: The same situation, but they set out a ladder that was just barely long enough. When they dove into the water, the boat, without their weight, rose slightly in the water, putting the ladder just out of reach.

3. A man is lying dead in a room. There is a large pile of gold and jewels on the floor, a chandelier attached to the ceiling, and a large open window.

Sol: The room is the ballroom of an ocean liner which sank some time ago. The man ran out of air while diving in the wreck.

4. A man and his wife raced through the streets. They stopped, and the husband got out of the car. When he came back, his wife was dead, and there was a stranger in the car.

Sol: The wife was about to have a baby. They drove to the hospital. The husband left to get a wheelchair, but the baby was born in the meantime, and the wife didn't survive the birth.

5. A body is discovered in a park in Chicago in the middle of summer. It has a fractured skull and many other broken bones, but the cause of death was hypothermia.

Sol: A poor peasant from somewhere in Europe desperately wants to come to the United States. Lacking money for airfare, he stows away in the landing gear compartment of a jet. He dies of hypothermia in mid-flight and falls out when the compartment opens as the plane makes its final approach.



6. A woman has incontrovertible proof in court that her husband was murdered by her sister. The judge declares, "This is the strangest case I've ever seen. Though it's a cut-and-dried case, this woman cannot be punished."  
Sol: The sisters are Siamese twins.
7. A man walks into a bar and asks for a drink. The bartender pulls out a gun and points it at him. The man says, "Thank you," and walks out.  
Sol: The man has hiccups; the bartender scares them away by pulling a gun.
8. A hunter aimed his gun carefully and fired. Seconds later, he realized his mistake. Minutes later, he was dead.  
Sol 1: It was winter. He fired the gun near a snowy cliff, which started an avalanche.  
Sol2: He shot an elephant with a low caliber rifle. Not powerful enough to kill it, the elephant became enraged and trampled him.
9. A man is returning from Switzerland by train. If he had been in a non-smoking car he would have died.  
Sol: The man used to be blind -- he's returning from an eye operation which restored his sight. He spent all his money on the operation, so when the train (which had no internal lighting) goes through a tunnel, he thinks he's gone blind again and decides to kill himself. But before he could do it, he saw the light of the cigarettes people were smoking and realized he could still see.
10. A man goes into a restaurant, orders albatross, eats one bite, and kills himself.  
Sol: The man, his wife, and a second man were in a ship that was wrecked on a desert island. The man's wife died in the wreck. When there was no food left, the second man brought what he said was an albatross but was really part of the dead wife. Later they were rescued, and at some point, the first man decides to order albatross at a restaurant. It tastes nothing like what he was told was albatross on the island, which makes him realize he really ate his wife. Unable to cope with the realization, he kills himself.
11. A man is found hanging in an otherwise empty locked room with a puddle of water under his feet.  
Sol: He stood on a block of ice to hang himself.
12. A man is dead in a puddle of blood and water on the floor of an otherwise empty locked room.  
Sol: He stabbed himself with an icicle.
13. A man is lying dead, face down in the desert. He's wearing a backpack.  
Sol: He jumped out of an airplane, but his parachute failed to open.



14. A man is lying dead, face down in the desert. There's a match near his outstretched hand.

Sol: He was with several others in a hot air balloon, crossing the desert. The balloon was punctured, and they began to lose altitude. They tossed all their non-essentials overboard and then their clothing and food, but they were still sinking too fast. They drew matches to see who would jump over the side and save the others. This man lost.

15. A man is driving his car. He turns on the radio, listens for five minutes, turns around, goes home, and shoots his wife.

Sol: The radio program is one of those shows where they call up someone at random and ask them a question. The announcer states the name and town of the man's wife as the person he would call next. He does so, and a male voice answers. From this, he gathered his wife was having an affair.

16. A man is driving his car. He turns on the radio, then pulls over to the side of the road and shoots himself.

Sol: He's a DJ at a radio station and decides he wants to kill his wife. To establish his alibi, he puts a prerecorded record on the air, quickly drives home, and kills her. On the way back, he turns on his show and discovers the record is skipping.

17. The music stops, and a woman dies.

Sol: The woman is a tightrope walker in a circus. Her act consists of walking the rope blindfolded, accompanied by music, without a net. The conductor is supposed to stop the music when she reaches the end of the rope, signaling that it's safe to step off onto the platform. That day, the usual conductor was ill. The substitute stopped the music early.

18. A man is dead in a room with a small pile of wood chips and sawdust in the corner.

Sol: The man is a blind midget, the shortest one in the circus. Another midget, jealous because he's not as short, has been sawing small pieces off the other's cane every night. When the midget uses his cane each morning, it appears to him that he's grown taller. Since his only income is from being a circus midget, he decides to kill himself when he gets too tall.

19. There's a flash of light, and a man dies.

Sol 1: The man is struck by lightning.

Sol 2: The man is a lion-tamer, posing for a photo with his lions. The lions react badly to the flash of the camera, and the man is momentarily blinded by it, so he gets mauled.



**20. A rope breaks. A bell rings. A man dies.**

Sol 1: A blind man enjoys walking near a cliff and uses the sound of a buoy to gauge his distance from the edge. One day the buoy's anchor rope breaks, allowing the buoy to drift away from the shore. When it rings, the man thinks he's further away from the edge than he is, walks over it, and falls to his death.

Sol 2: The man is a bell ringer. One day the rope breaks, and he falls down the shaft and dies.

**21. A man is lying drowned in a dead forest.**

Sol: He was scuba diving when a firefighting plane landed nearby and filled its tanks with water, sucking him in. He ran out of air while the plane was in flight; then the water, with him in it, was dumped onto a burning forest.

**22. A woman buys a new pair of shoes, goes to work, and dies.**

Sol: The woman is the assistant to a circus knife-thrower, who stands in front of a target as knives are thrown around her. The new shoes have higher heels than she normally wears, causing the thrower to misjudge his aim.

**23. A man meets a one armed man on a subway, who pulls a gun and shoots him.**

Sol: These two men, along with several others, were shipwrecked on a desert island and had run out of food. The men agreed that they needed to eat their arms to survive, but that if one person had to lose his arm to save them, they should all lose their arms. The men were rescued before the last man's arm was eaten; this man ran away before he could be caught and forced to give up his arm.

However, he bumped into one of the other survivors in the subway one day, who killed him for not living up to his end of the bargain.

**24. A man is lying awake in bed. He makes a phone call, says nothing, and goes to sleep.**

Sol: He is in a hotel and is unable to sleep because the man in the adjacent room is snoring. He calls the snorer up (at this hotel, like many others, the phone numbers are based on the room number). The snorer wakes up and answers. The first man hangs up without saying anything and goes to sleep before the snorer starts snoring again.

**25. A man kills his wife, then goes inside his house and kills himself.**

Sol: It's the man's fiftieth birthday, and in celebration of this he plans to kill his wife and move to a new life in another state. His wife takes him out to dinner; afterward, on their front step, he kills her. He opens the door, dragging her body in with him, and suddenly all the lights turn on and a group of his friends shout, "Surprise!" Caught red-handed, the man kills himself.



26. Two men enter a bar. They are served identical drinks. One lives; the other dies.  
Sol: The drinks contain poisoned ice cubes; one man drinks slowly, giving them time to melt, while the other drinks quickly and thus doesn't get much of the poison.
27. Joe, wearing a mask and carrying an empty sack, leaves his house. An hour later he returns with a full sack. He goes into a room and turns out the lights.  
Sol: Joe is a kid who goes trick-or-treating for Halloween, returns, and goes to sleep.
28. Hans and Fritz are German spies during World War II. They try to enter America, posing as returning tourists. Hans is immediately arrested.  
Sol: Crossing the border, Hans and Fritz were required to fill out a personal information form, which asked, among other things, their birthdays. The German date ordering is day/month/year, rather than the American way, month/day/year. Fritz was born on, say, July 7th, so he wrote down 7/7/15 -- no problem. Hans was born on, say, July 20th, so he wrote down 20/7/15 instead of the American way, 7/20/15. Since Hans had claimed to be a returning American, he was found out by the border police.
29. Tim and Greg were talking. Tim said, "The terror of flight." Greg said, "The gloom of the grave." Greg was arrested.  
Sol: Greg is a German spy during World War II. Tim, an American, is suspicious of him, so he plays a word-association game with him. When Tim says, "The land of the free," Greg says, "The home of the brave." When Tim says, "The terror of flight," Greg says, "The gloom of the grave." Any U.S. citizen would know the first verse of the national anthem, but only a spy would have memorized the third.
30. A man dies of thirst in his own home.  
Sol: His home is a houseboat, and he has run out of water while on an extended cruise.
31. A man gets onto an elevator. When the elevator stops, he knows his wife is dead.  
Sol: He's leaving a hospital after visiting his wife, who's on a life support system. The power goes out, stopping the elevator and, he guesses, the life support system, too. (He assumes if the emergency backup generator were working, the elevator wouldn't lose power either.)
32. A man is running along a corridor with a piece of paper in his hand. The lights flicker, and the man drops to his knees and cries out, "Oh no!"  
Sol: The man is delivering a pardon, and the flicker of the lights indicates that the person to be pardoned has just been electrocuted.



33. A car without a driver moves; a man dies.

Sol: The murderer sets the car on a slope above the hot dog stand where the victim works. He wedges an ice block in the car to keep the brake pedal down, puts the car in neutral, and flies to another city to avoid suspicion. It's a warm day; when the ice melts, the car rolls down the hill and kills the hot dog man.

34. A woman throws something out a window and dies.

Sol: The object she throws is a boomerang. It flies out, loops around, comes back, and hits her in the head.

35. An avid birdwatcher sees an unexpected bird. Soon, they're both dead.

Sol: He is a passenger in an airplane and sees the bird get sucked into an engine at 20,000 feet. The engine stalls, and the plane crashes.

36. There are a carrot, a pile of pebbles, and a pipe lying together in the middle of a field.

Sol: They're the remains of a melted snowman.

37. An ordinary American citizen, with no passport, visits over thirty foreign countries in one day. He is welcomed in each country and leaves each one of his own accord.

Sol: He is a mail courier who delivers packages to the different foreign embassies in the United States. The land of an embassy belongs to the country of the embassy, not to the United States.

38. A man is found dead in an alley lying in a red pool with a stick near his head.

Sol: The man died from eating a poisoned popsicle.

39. A man lies dead next to a feather.

Sol: The man was a sword swallower in a carnival side show. While he was practicing, someone tickled his throat with the feather, causing him to gag.

40. A man wakes up one night to get some water. He turns off the light and goes back to bed. The next morning he looks out the window, screams, and kills himself.

Sol: The man is a lighthouse keeper. He wasn't quite awake when he got up in the night -- unwittingly, he had shut off the light in the lighthouse. During the night, a ship crashes on the rocks. When the man realized what he had done, he killed himself.

41. She grabbed his ring, pulled on it, and dropped it, thereby saving his life.

Sol: They were skydiving. He broke his arm as he jumped from the plane by hitting it on the plane door, and he couldn't reach his ripcord with his other arm. She pulled the ripcord for him.



42. A man sitting on a park bench reads a newspaper article headlined "Death at Sea" and knows a murder has been committed.

Sol: The man is a travel agent. He had sold someone two tickets for an ocean voyage, one round-trip and one one-way. The last name of the man who bought the tickets is the same as the last name of the woman who "fell" overboard and drowned on the voyage, which is the subject of the article he's reading.

43. A man drives down the highway at 55 miles per hour. He passes three cars going 60 miles per hour, then gets pulled over by a police officer and is given a ticket.

Sol: The man was driving the wrong way on a one way street.

44. A man tries the new cologne his wife gave him for his birthday. He goes out to get some food and is killed.

Sol: The man is a beekeeper, and the bees attack en masse because they don't recognize his fragrance.

45. A man is doing his job when his suit tears. Ten seconds later, he's dead.

Sol: The man works at a factory. His clothing got caught on a piece of machinery, dragged him in, and killed him.

46. A man is doing his job when his suit tears. Three minutes later, he's dead.

Sol: The man is an astronaut out on a space walk.

47. A married couple goes to a movie. During the movie the husband strangles the wife. He is able to get her body home without attracting attention.

Sol: The movie is at a drive-in theatre.

48. Mr. Browning is glad the car ran out of gas.

Sol: Mr. and Mrs. Browning had just gotten married. Mrs. Browning was subject to fits of depression. They had their first fight soon after they were married; Mr. Browning stormed out of the house, and Mrs. Browning went into the garage and started up the car, intending to kill herself by filling the garage with car exhaust. But the car ran out of gas quickly, and Mr. Browning, returning home to apologize, found Mrs. Browning in time to summon help and restore her to health.

49. A man is sitting suspended over two pressurized containers. Suddenly, he dies.

Sol: He's riding a bicycle or motorcycle, and he crashes and dies.

50. A man leaves a motel room, goes to his car, honks the horn, and returns.

Sol: It's the middle of the night. The man goes outside to get something from his car, but forgets which room he was in. His wife is deaf, so he honks the car horn loudly, waking up everyone else in the motel. The other residents all get up and turn on their lights, and the man returns to the one room that remains dark.



**51. Two dead people sit in their cars on a street.**

Sol: Because there was a heavy fog, two people driving in opposite directions on the same road both stuck their heads out of their windows to see the center line better. Their heads hit each other at high speed, killing them both.

**52. A man ran into a fire and lived. A man stayed where there was no fire and died.**

Sol: The two men were working in a small room protected by a carbon dioxide gas fire extinguisher system, when a fire broke out in an adjoining room. One of the men ran through the fire and escaped with only minor burns. The other one stayed in the room until the fire extinguishers kicked in and died of oxygen starvation.

**53. Three men die. On the pavement are pieces of ice and broken glass.**

Sol: A large man takes the elevator from the ground floor to the third floor penthouse apartment he shares with his wife. After greeting her, he sees a man's watch on the table and assumes she's been having an affair. Thinking her boyfriend has escaped down the stairs, he rushes to the French windows and sees a good-looking man just leaving the main entrance of the building. Furious, the husband pushes the refrigerator through the window onto the young man below. The young man is killed by the refrigerator. The husband is killed from a heart attack caused by overexertion. The wife's boyfriend, who was hiding inside the refrigerator, is killed from the fall.

**54. A man ate some food that was not poisoned, yet nevertheless caused him to die.**

Sol 1: A man choked to death on a fried chicken leg.

Sol 2: The man was Adam, and eating the forbidden fruit was punished by God making him mortal...so that he'd ultimately die.

**55. One of Johnny's dearest loved ones binds him to a chair, but Johnny doesn't mind.**

Sol: Johnny is a kid. The chair is a seat in a car. One of Johnny's parents put his seatbelt on for him.

**56. Two people in a room alone. One looks around and realizes he's going to die.**

Sol: The two people are Siamese twins. One wakes up, notices that the other one is dead, and realizes he will die soon, too.

**57. A woman tells her children to do something, but just one boy obeys. The woman says something to him, and he stomps away, sits down, and sulks**

Sol: The woman is playing a game of "Simon Says" with her children.





58. A woman tries to drop a man into the ocean -- by his own request -- but when she tries, he blows back in.

Sol: The man has been cremated. The woman is his wife. Before his death, he requested that his ashes be scattered on the ocean. But it's a windy day, and his ashes blow back on the boat.