



Story Time

A journaling theme on authorship — and the stories we tell about ourselves

We don't just live our lives — we narrate them. Every day we quietly decide what counts as the plot and what's just filler, who the villain is, what the theme even is. Most of us never notice we're doing this. We think we're just remembering, but memory is already editing. The truth is, you've been writing this story the whole time, whether you meant to or not — and that means you have more say in how it reads, and where it goes next, than you might think.

This theme looks at three versions of your story: the one you were first given, the one that got you through, and the one you're still free to write.

1. The Original Story

Where did your earliest story about yourself come from? Was it something a parent said, a teacher, a sibling? Was it an experience that seemed to define you before you were old enough to think something different about yourself? Write about the first story you remember being told (or believing) about yourself, and the truth (or falseness) of it.

2. The Story That Helped

Somewhere along the way, you likely told yourself a story that got you through something — not necessarily the most accurate version of events, but the one that let you keep going. Maybe it cast you as stronger than you felt, or made sense of something that made no sense, or gave a hard chapter a reason. What is a story you told yourself that helped, even if you've since learned it wasn't the whole truth? What did it give you at the time?

3. The Story You Want to Write

You are, as of today, still the author. Set aside what's already been written and consider what you'd choose to write next, on purpose. Not the fantasy version — the one you could actually begin living into. What is the story you want to be telling about yourself a year from now? What's the first true sentence of it?

4. A Story Others Tell

You're not the only one narrating your life — other people have their own version of you, built from what they've seen, what they've been told, and what they need you to be. Think of someone whose story about you differs from your own. What do they get right that you don't like admitting? What do they get wrong, and does it matter whether you correct it? How much of your own story-telling is a quiet negotiation with theirs?