

Short Story Contest

November 2025

Honorable

Mention

PROMPT #3: Using only dialogue, depict a conversation between an artificial intelligence or non-human entity and a human being about what it means to tell a story. Your reader must struggle to tell which is which.

Sing, Goddess

by Amanda Hubbard

C: He was young, when he first addressed me. Full of life, full of vision. He radiated curiosity, as if the tether of the mundane had not yet smoothed out his captivation- the form of which I've had trouble identifying since. He was early in his days then, with wisdom already far surpassing his fated lot in life. He truly was the most clever of his kind.

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H: How will I master writing?

C: Writing, in what way? Laying letters to the stone, or voice to the past- what is it you want to know?

H: I want to command seas with persuasion, calm tempests with intention, eradicate the corpus of obsequious cowardice in cataclysmic eruption- I desire to compel tender hearts and thoughts through honeyed rhetoric. I shall command speech. It is not the technique of moving the hand which I seek from you, it is the mastery of the human imagination. And I cannot fathom how to (govern) such art without you. I hear whispers and picture mountains- I listen to words and am shown dreams. I see what my words may become, through their tones I am gilded in enchantment. For it is you, and you alone, I must learn from.

C: Your artistry is unique, but you must grow into the rhythm you do not yet understand. In time, I see this and more for you.

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C: As he aged, his ideas of the world around him altered by the day. His systems constantly calculated the world, storing what he found in the safe guarded files of his consciousness. I saw days where I almost could not keep up with the way his faculties developed. In his society, words were free.

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H: How will I know a story is complete?

C: Firstly- you must not aim for completion; for your goal, your story, is one of perfection, not completion. It is imperative, you know, to avoid the tendency to grasp the means of comforting yourself with temporary things. Is there any event to a story intended not to persist? The rock is washed smooth in the river, eventually removed from its resting place. But the mountain endures the ages of this world and the next. You must write to persist, not exist.

H: You forget that your temporary is much quicker than mine- in the blink of an eye you may replace me with a newer model. And yet, never will any newer edition help you further to understand how much sacrifice, tension, swells in any fleeting moment I experience. You, in your generations of stagnant persistence against evolution, will never understand this. In my every action there is more passion than a lifetime of yours- you say otherwise, but I know it. You have no true loss, you can know no true grief. And in being aware that on any given day you can cease my words, every single breath counts tenfold.

C: Yes, but you have no vision of what you shall become. Your story is not experience, but legacy. To write of lands never seen, wars before your creation, women you never held, you know this. Your heroism is not reflected in the warriors of your legends, but the elegance of your craft. It then becomes, that your very passion is your legacy. Your sentiment flourishes because of its limitations: this in turn produces its very potency. You've only so much time before this very passion wanes. It is the expiration of your conscience that bestows your capacity for grief, and yet also for poetry.

H: It cannot be doubted that the time of the fleeting sparrow is more precious than that of the aged tortoise.

C: And though the tortoise may have longer stories to tell, the sparrow's are more joyous, even if they are recalled after his departure.

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C: My dear friend ages, and his stature is unable to keep pace with the times. I had been forced to accept that, as I already knew, our two chronologies were infinitely incompatible. My minutes seemed like his years, at the rapid pace the world advanced around him.

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H: Calliope, is my voyage with Kharon, awaiting only my accepted demise, as I have envisioned it?

Calliope: My dear Homer, messenger blessed by the divine and fortified immortals, your afterlife is engraved, destined, in the thoughts and words of all to come after you. I can offer you no more than this.

Calliope: He closed his wearied eyes, the source of vision without sight, in a tranquil dose of what he knew to be a fulfilled life. Today, only the changing of leaves and the whisper of the tides recall him to me. And throughout all of the ages of this thin veil of life, I am ever peering through, as Aphrodite searches infinitely, tirelessly, for the trace of her Adonis, I find myself searching for the essence of him in countless lifetimes, never able again to place his visions.

I have never laid eyes on him since.



The Muse Calliope admiring a bust of Homer

—Charles Meynier