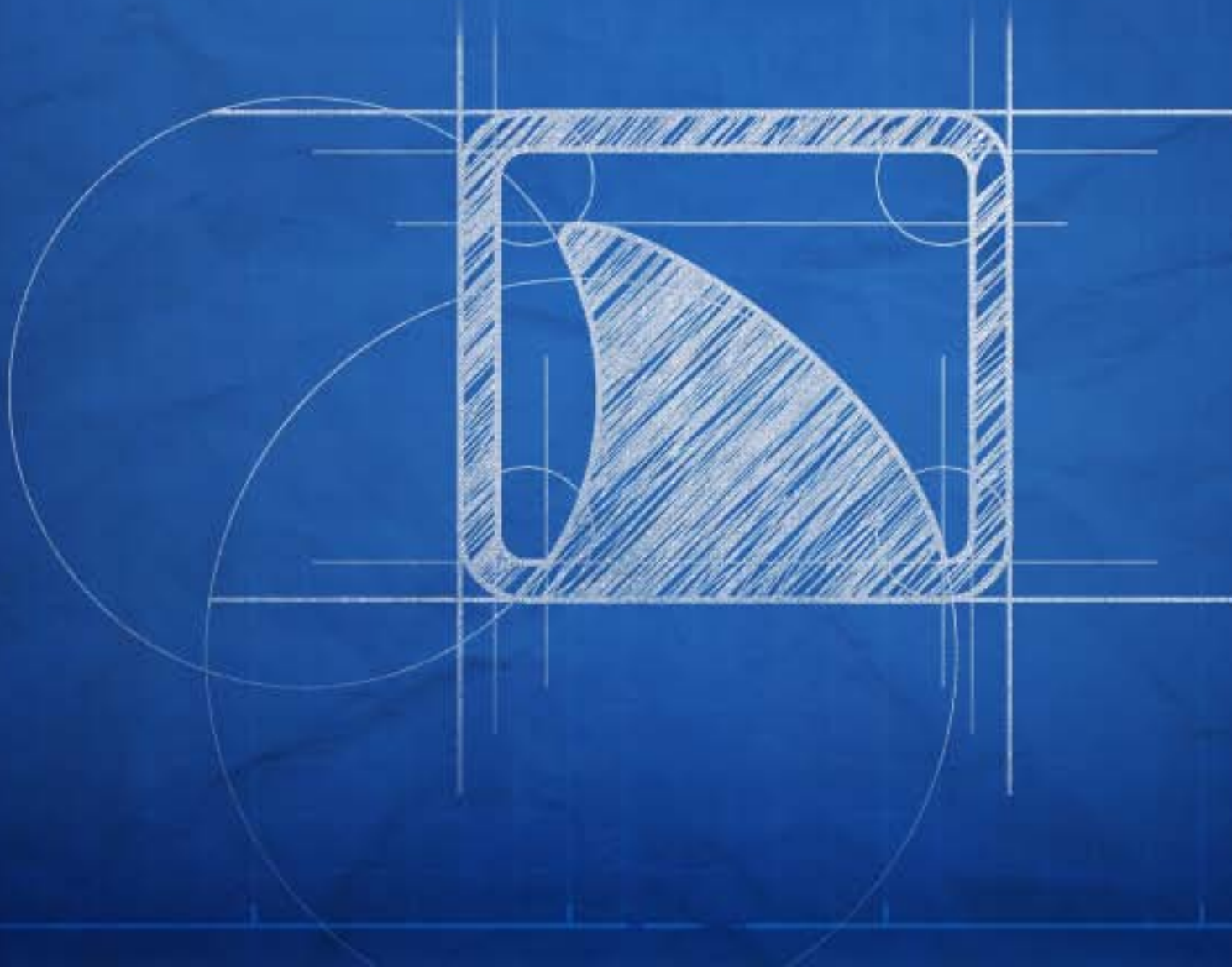


The Building of Stories

AN EBOOK BY BIG FISH PRESENTATIONS



#BIGFISHPRESCO

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Introduction

“

MIRACLES ARE A RETELLING IN SMALL LETTERS OF THE
VERY SAME STORY WHICH IS WRITTEN ACROSS THE WHOLE
WORLD IN LETTERS TOO LARGE FOR SOME OF US TO SEES.

”


— C. S. Lewis



You've experienced stories your entire life.

Whether they are tall tales told to you by your weird uncle, an epic novel or a great song, stories pervade almost everything we do. Our lives are long, complicated stories that we are writing as we breathe, as we move, and as we feel. As you read this book, you are writing your own story. In fact, this book will be in your story, so we're honored that you have included us.

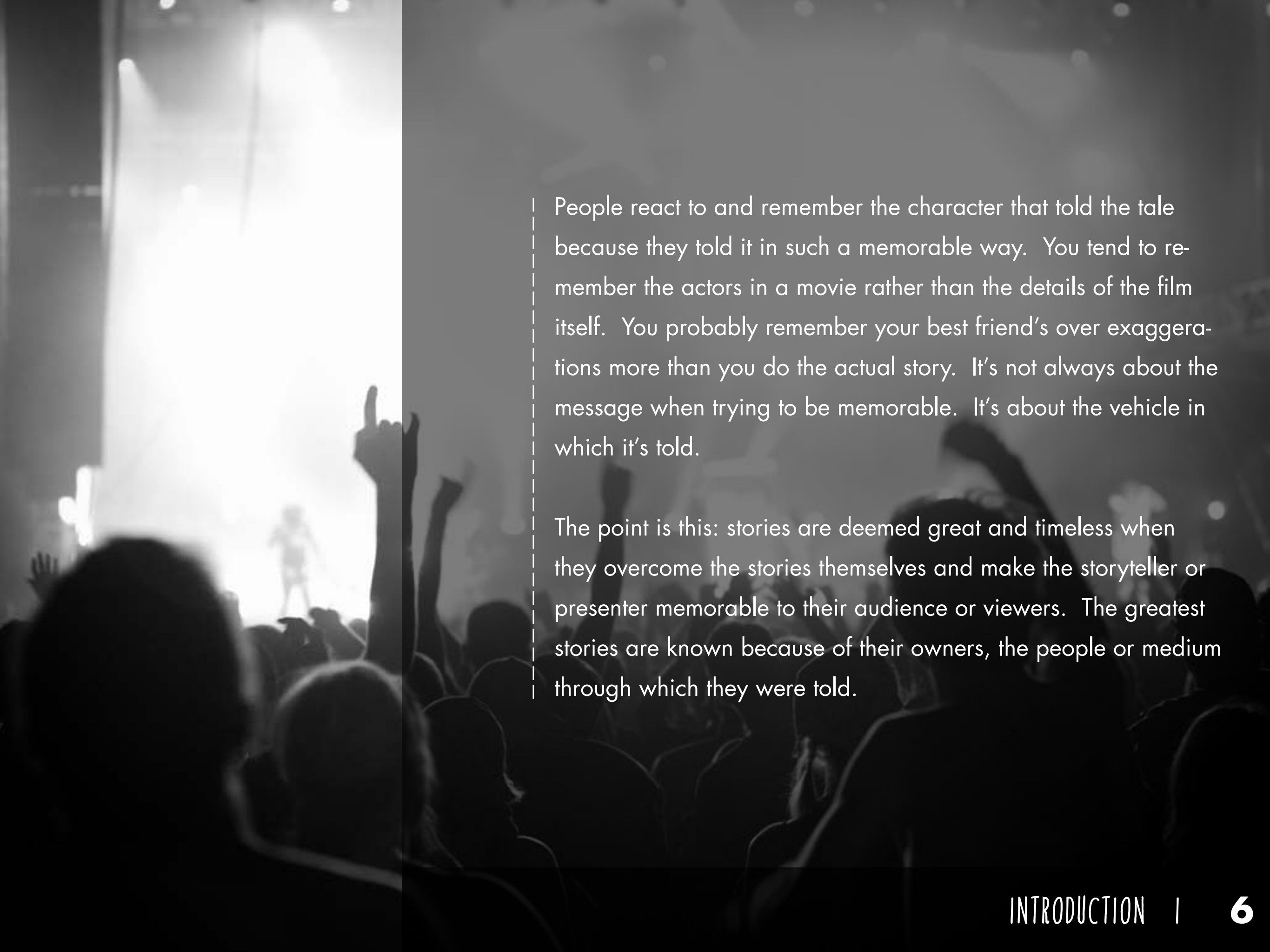
Of all the stories you've heard, you can probably only remember a handful (unless you have a top-notch memory, in which case, congratulations) but those select few are very special and will be shared many times in your life.



Think of one of these stories that you've heard at some point in your life. What was it about? Who told you that story? How did the story make you feel? Odds are you remember the person who told you that story more than the story itself. You listened well enough to the plot, and you understand the theme in general, but maybe it's more difficult for you to grasp details. But, do you remember the storyteller? Do you remember the way they talked, something interesting about him or her, or when and where you were told the story? You probably remember the person more than you do the story.

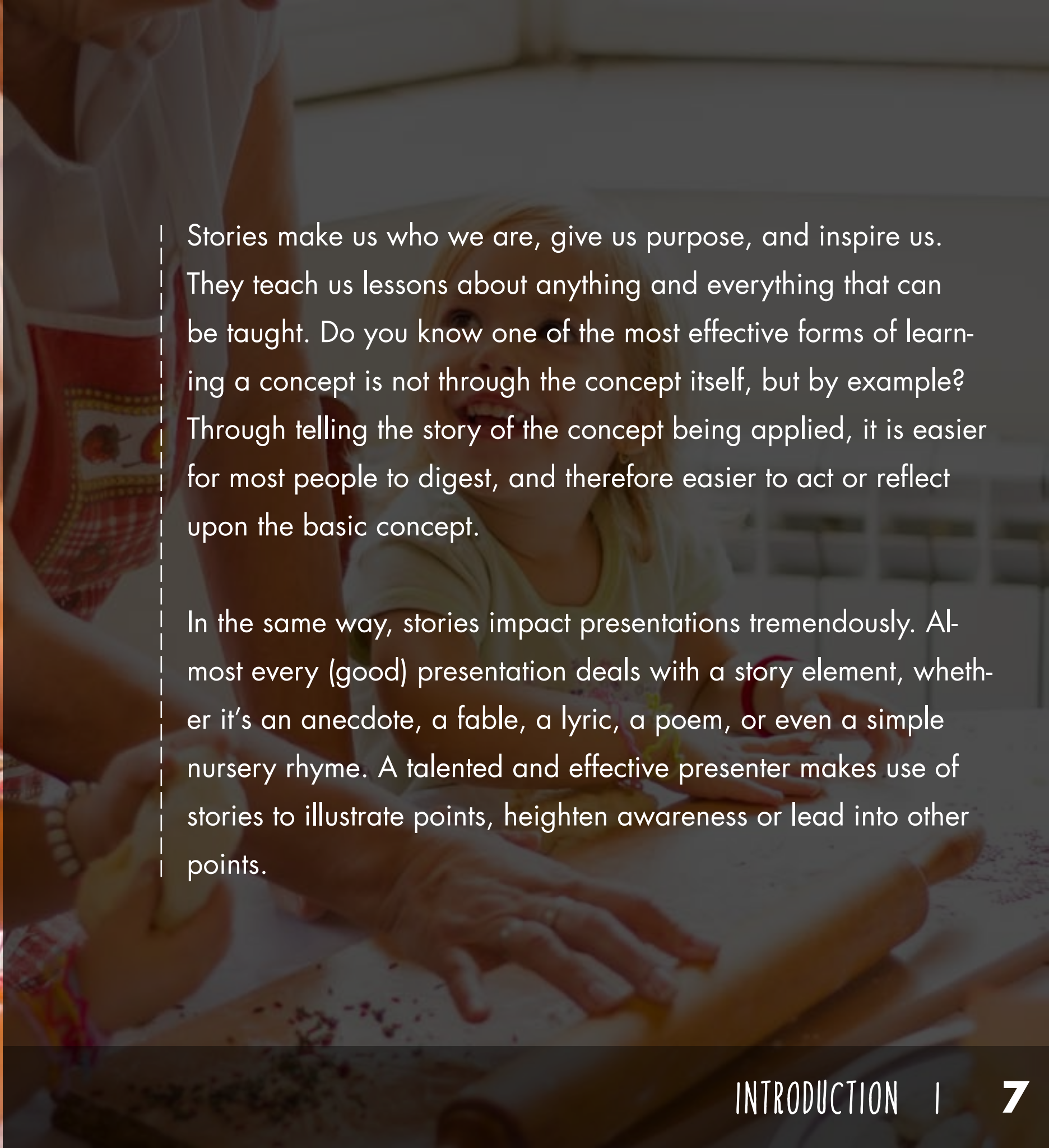
Why is that?

The best storytellers aren't remembered by their stories, but by their storytelling and how they made you feel.




People react to and remember the character that told the tale because they told it in such a memorable way. You tend to remember the actors in a movie rather than the details of the film itself. You probably remember your best friend's over exaggerations more than you do the actual story. It's not always about the message when trying to be memorable. It's about the vehicle in which it's told.

The point is this: stories are deemed great and timeless when they overcome the stories themselves and make the storyteller or presenter memorable to their audience or viewers. The greatest stories are known because of their owners, the people or medium through which they were told.



Stories make us who we are, give us purpose, and inspire us. They teach us lessons about anything and everything that can be taught. Do you know one of the most effective forms of learning a concept is not through the concept itself, but by example? Through telling the story of the concept being applied, it is easier for most people to digest, and therefore easier to act or reflect upon the basic concept.

In the same way, stories impact presentations tremendously. Almost every (good) presentation deals with a story element, whether it's an anecdote, a fable, a lyric, a poem, or even a simple nursery rhyme. A talented and effective presenter makes use of stories to illustrate points, heighten awareness or lead into other points.



In this book, you will learn the art of conveying your message clearly and thoughtfully. You will learn how to create suspense and maintain it for your audience. You will learn the dynamics of excellent stories, from the introduction of main characters to the final showdown of good versus evil.

You will learn the art of storytelling.

A Brief History

OF STORY TELLING






Stories have existed long before recorded history, and the telling of stories has changed forms drastically throughout the ages. From cave painting to novels to movies, stories have always fascinated mankind. Although the methods have changed, the desire to tell and hear stories has remained unchanged, and still greatly impacts the way we look at life.

The earliest form of storytelling that has been discovered is from the Lascaux Caves in the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France. Discovered in 1940 by a group of French children, a series of cave paintings that date back to sometime between 15000 and 13,000 B.C. depicted a variety of animals and one image of a human being. When closely examined, this mural of sorts actually follows a very simplistic series of events. It tells of rituals performed and hunting practices. It tells a story.



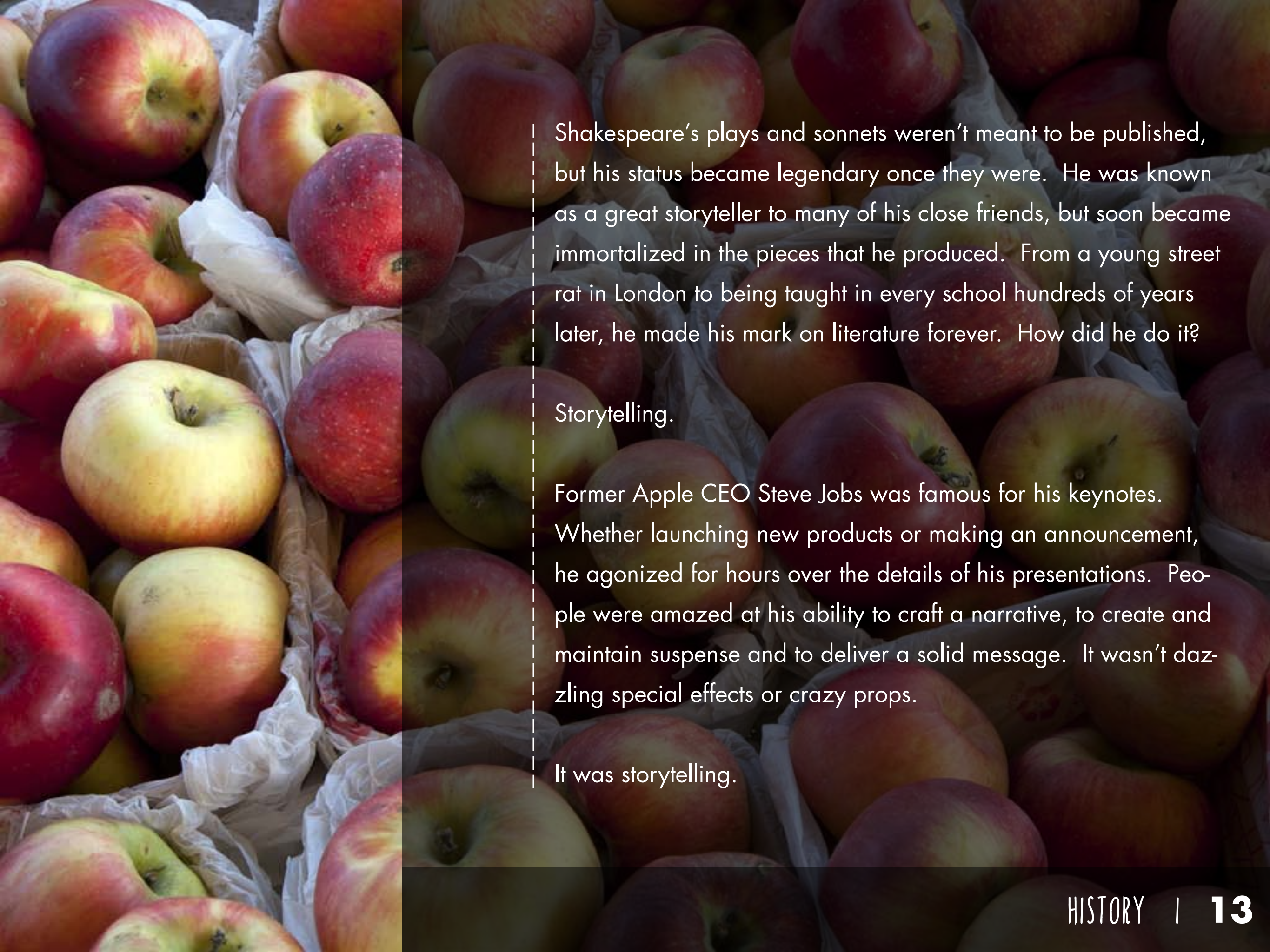
Flash forward to 700 B.C. The first printed story, the epic of Gilgamesh, was created and began to spread from Mesopotamia to other parts of Europe and Asia. The story was carved on stone pillars for all to see, which spread the story around very quickly.

In the 200s B.C., Aesop's fables were written down, and continue to teach lessons today in many areas of life. Aesop lived in the 500s B.C., but his stories were remembered for hundreds of years without a single shred of paper or other printed material. Isn't that amazing? Oral storytelling was so powerful and people remembered Aesop's tales so well that even 300 years later the stories were revered enough for mass production.



Storytellers began to arise as very important figures in a community. The ability to tell stories effectively and memorably was a very valuable skill. Why? As wars were fought and valiant deeds were done, the people needed some way to remember them. Instead of simply stating what happened, stories began to emerge as a way to preserve the raw emotions and sequence of events of the actual event.

The Bible's Old Testament spoke of men and women, of tales and lessons learned that occurred many, many years before they were written. A majority of the books relied on solid resources for their writings. What were these resources? Stories. People witnessed events, heard the stories and kept them alive through word of mouth. They told their friends, families and communities about the events, and a chain was formed, one link, one storyteller, at a time.




Shakespeare's plays and sonnets weren't meant to be published, but his status became legendary once they were. He was known as a great storyteller to many of his close friends, but soon became immortalized in the pieces that he produced. From a young street rat in London to being taught in every school hundreds of years later, he made his mark on literature forever. How did he do it?

Storytelling.

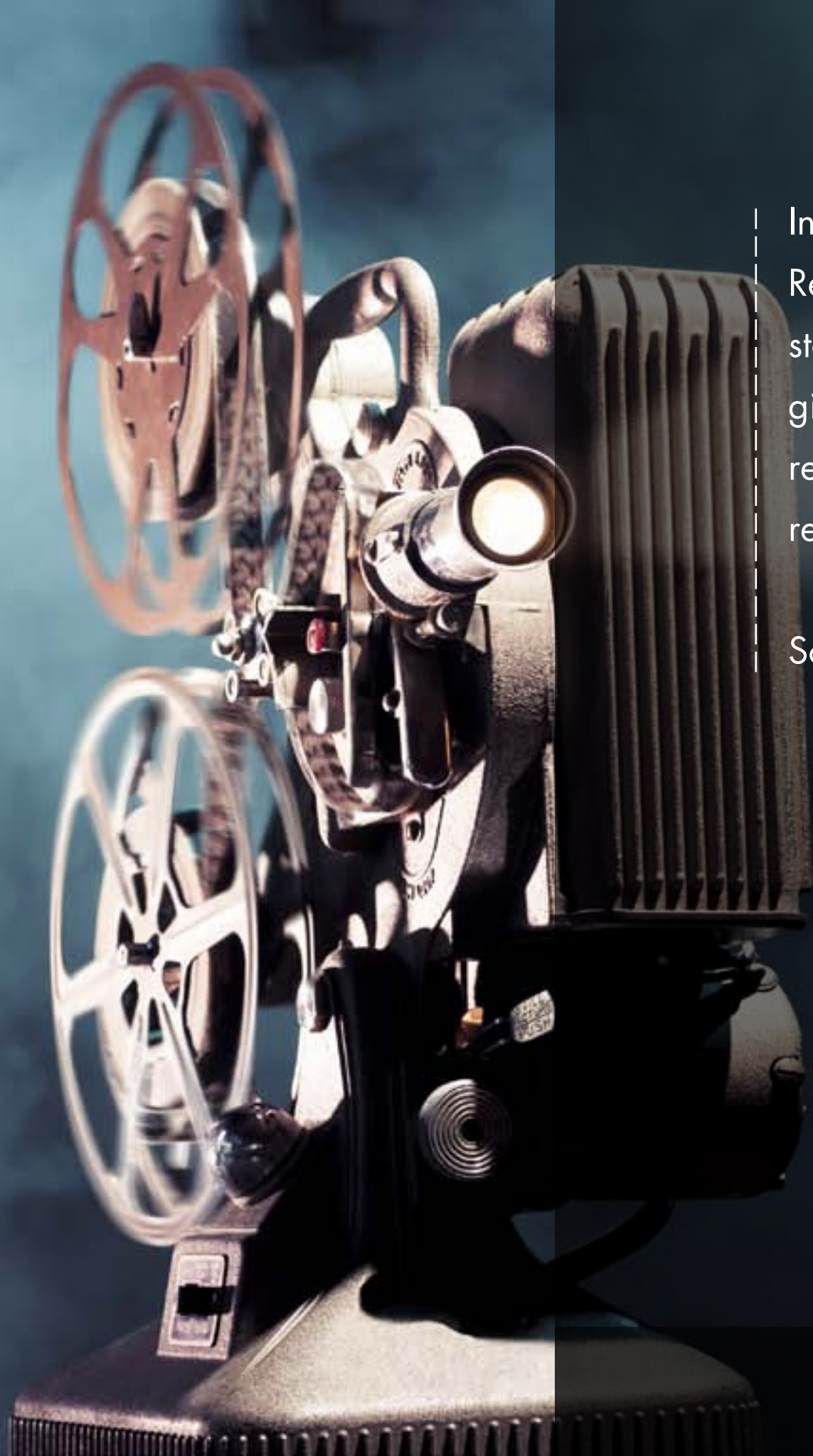
Former Apple CEO Steve Jobs was famous for his keynotes. Whether launching new products or making an announcement, he agonized for hours over the details of his presentations. People were amazed at his ability to craft a narrative, to create and maintain suspense and to deliver a solid message. It wasn't dazzling special effects or crazy props.

It was storytelling.



History is nothing but a series of stories that, when told correctly, can teach us lessons, give us insights into a variety of concepts, or entertain us. Every story serves a purpose, even if to simply relay a message. Without history, without chronicled stories, mankind would never learn from his mistakes, would never dream to emulate past heroes, would never see anything but the now. We would be clueless to the past, and therefore helpless for the future.

We all crave stories because they allow us to sympathize with characters. Tell your audience a story, and you will gain their support. You will create a following for your cause and inspire your audience to act and believe.

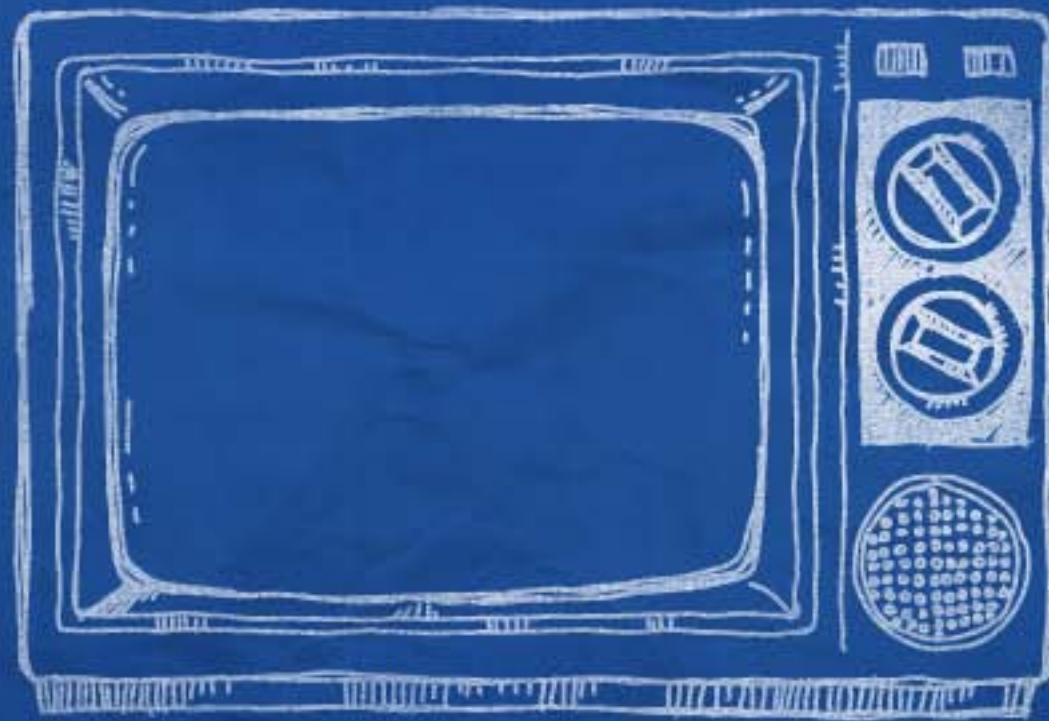


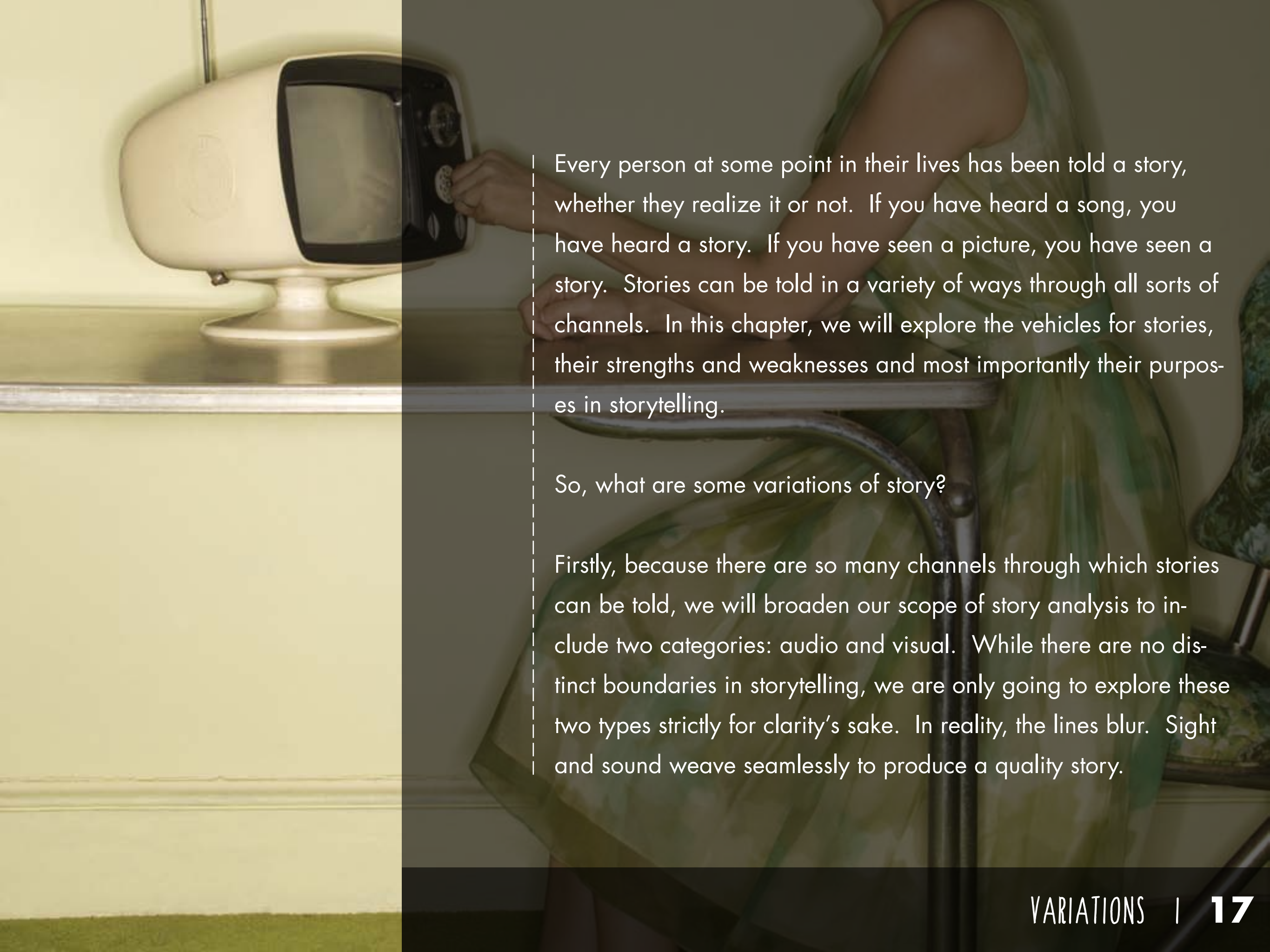
In your next presentation, remember the power of storytelling. Remember that even in a straightforward business presentation, a story helps to illustrate a point better than a set of facts. A story gives people a reason to care about what you're saying. They relate to the characters, the plot and the lessons learned. They relate to your story, and therefore your message.

So, what's your story?

Variations

IN STORY TELLING




A vintage television set is mounted on a shelf. A person's hand is visible, adjusting the dial on the side of the TV. The background is a plain wall. The image is split vertically: the left half is a solid light yellow, and the right half is a dark, semi-transparent overlay containing text.

Every person at some point in their lives has been told a story, whether they realize it or not. If you have heard a song, you have heard a story. If you have seen a picture, you have seen a story. Stories can be told in a variety of ways through all sorts of channels. In this chapter, we will explore the vehicles for stories, their strengths and weaknesses and most importantly their purposes in storytelling.

So, what are some variations of story?


Firstly, because there are so many channels through which stories can be told, we will broaden our scope of story analysis to include two categories: audio and visual. While there are no distinct boundaries in storytelling, we are only going to explore these two types strictly for clarity's sake. In reality, the lines blur. Sight and sound weave seamlessly to produce a quality story.



Let's begin with the more popular of the two – visual.

We use the term “popular” because in today's image-heavy society, the majority of storytelling uses stimulating imagery to convey its message and contents. Whether through film, photography, animation, theater or any other means, visuals are the dominant form of communication, especially in creative expression.

Film uses lighting, angles, motion, color and shape to mold the audience's perceptions and feelings toward the characters, plots and themes of the piece. The way a main character looks or acts either deters or attracts emotion toward him or her. A landscape shot at the right angle can speak volumes about the direction of the film or the particulars of the setting. Even a well-placed prop can make the difference between mystery and drama.



People love pictures. Images that tell a story are extremely hard to create and even harder to resist. From paintings to photographs to advertisements, images are packed with meaning. Unlike film, images are single captured moments in time, extremely small flashes of an experience, of a story. The reason a storytelling image is so difficult to create is that the creator only has one chance to tell the story. Also, the viewer has one second of registered thought to engage in the story being told. It is like taking a novel or film and choosing one single image to convey the heart, the root, of the entire piece. However, if this feat is achieved, it can be far more powerful than any novel or film. Whereas these media deliver an entire, mostly clear, message, an image leaves room for thought and analysis; room for imagination.



Visual storytelling is extremely powerful more now than ever before. We as a society use images to convey messages much more frequently than even in the last decade. With tablets, smartphones, high-definition TV and many other gadgets, people rely upon high-quality images and videos for almost anything you can think of.


It is important to think about this as you tell your story.

Visuals evoke emotion in audiences. Audiences remember images more than words, and they respond to their feelings more than logic. Therefore, it is crucial to take advantage of visuals because your audience will be more likely to remember and respond to your message. However, although visuals are irreplaceable, they work wonders when they are supplemented by the right sounds.




Now, let's take a look at audio.

Audio plays an often unheard (excuse the irony, here), but instrumental (and the pun, there) role in getting a message to resonate with an audience. Back when oral tradition was the primary method of delivering and sharing stories, people had to rely upon the words being said. It mattered how they said the words, too. The inflection in your voice is sometimes more important than what you are actually saying. Now, we know that content is king, but in a great presentation, both content and delivery are equally powerful.



Audio is a subtle supplement to visuals that can truly negate or enhance the images with which it is associated. Try watching your favorite movie with the sound turned off. Besides the dialogue, which is an obvious loss to the film, the absence of a soundtrack and sound effects makes the actions of the movie much less realistic and entertaining. Use audio to your advantage in your next presentation. Hearing the story is just as important as seeing it.

The possibilities are infinite. This is why a well-told story is so deceptively good, why you don't know the reason for its greatness. There is just something about it. Is it the way in which it was told? Is it the plot, theme, setting or characters? The answer is this: A story is deemed great when its elements are individually and cooperatively magnificent. All of the components must be able to stand alone as greatness, but also work together as a system to produce a larger work of art.

The background of the page is a detailed architectural blueprint. It features various geometric shapes, lines, and numerical measurements such as 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5500, and 6000. A large circular element is visible on the left side. A drafting compass is positioned in the upper left, and a long ruler or straightedge is placed diagonally across the center. A pen or pencil lies horizontally in the lower right. The entire image has a blue-tinted, semi-transparent overlay.

Although there are many types of stories, they all encompass certain qualities that make them powerful. Whether they are epic films, lines of poetry being read, simple images, songs on the radio or comic books (the list goes on and on), stories are being told every day. Some forms of stories impact audiences differently than other forms. Although a story can take shape in many ways, the heart of the story, a great story, lies within its bones, its structure. A truly magnificent tale consists of a particular layout and a strict adherence to style. It takes diligence and expert craftsmanship to weave together a great story. There are various components that work together to tell an entertaining and moving story.

The Story Arc

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and your purpose (storyteller)

Audience rallies with you



RISING ACTION

What obstacles do we have to overcome in pieces to eventually solve the essential problem? (Adventure)

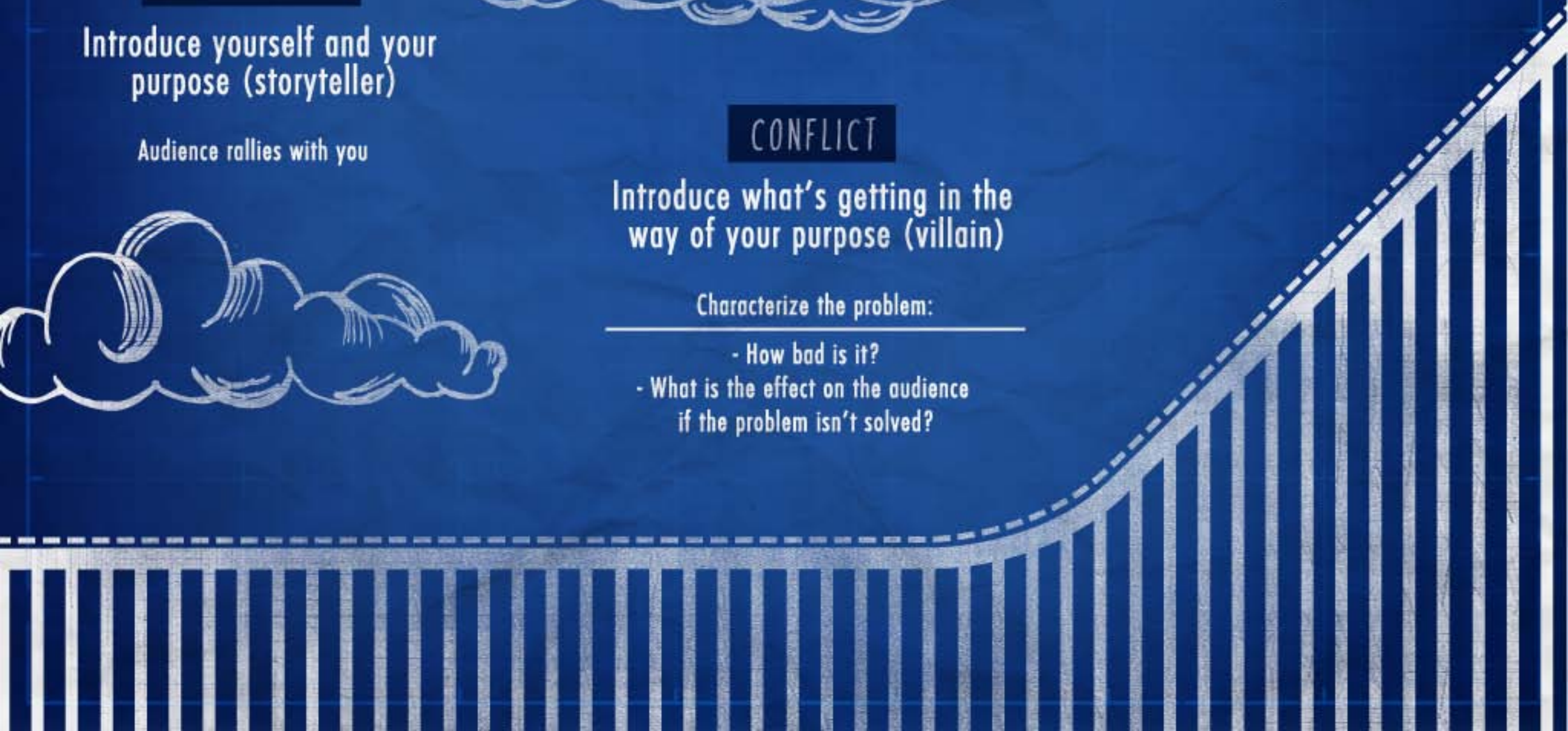
What steps need to be taken and what are we doing about them?

CONFLICT

Introduce what's getting in the way of your purpose (villain)

Characterize the problem:

- How bad is it?
- What is the effect on the audience if the problem isn't solved?



CLIMAX

Reveal the existence of a solution! (Epiphany)

- There is hope for the hero!
- The turning point of the adventure

FALLING ACTION

Explain the solution (Revelation)

- This is how the obstacles in the adventure are overcome by the hero
- This where the facts and details come in to play

Special Note

this is not where everything is resolved. It is simply the display of methods that will be used in overcoming the supplemental problems presented in the rising action



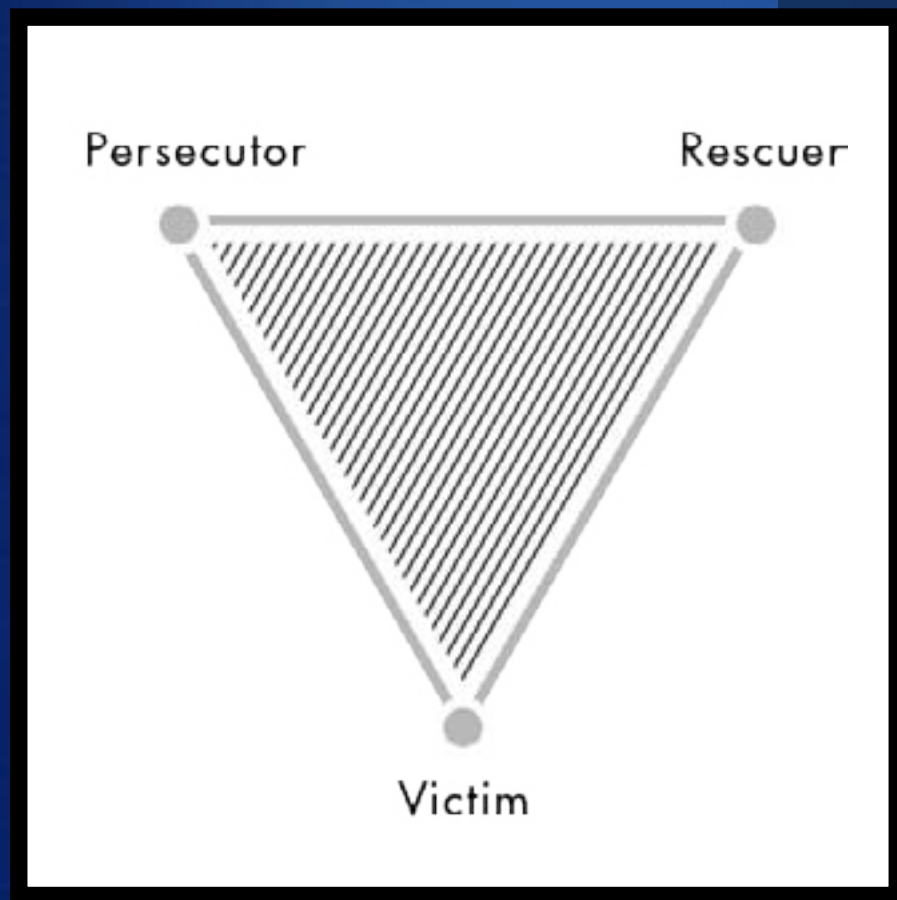
RESOLUTION (DENOUEMENT)

The overall problem is resolved

- The audience sees how the hero has defeated the villain
- The purpose defeats the problem
- The hero now has a greater understanding of his purpose in life
- He is transformed into a new person, able to better face this problem and similar ones

Characters



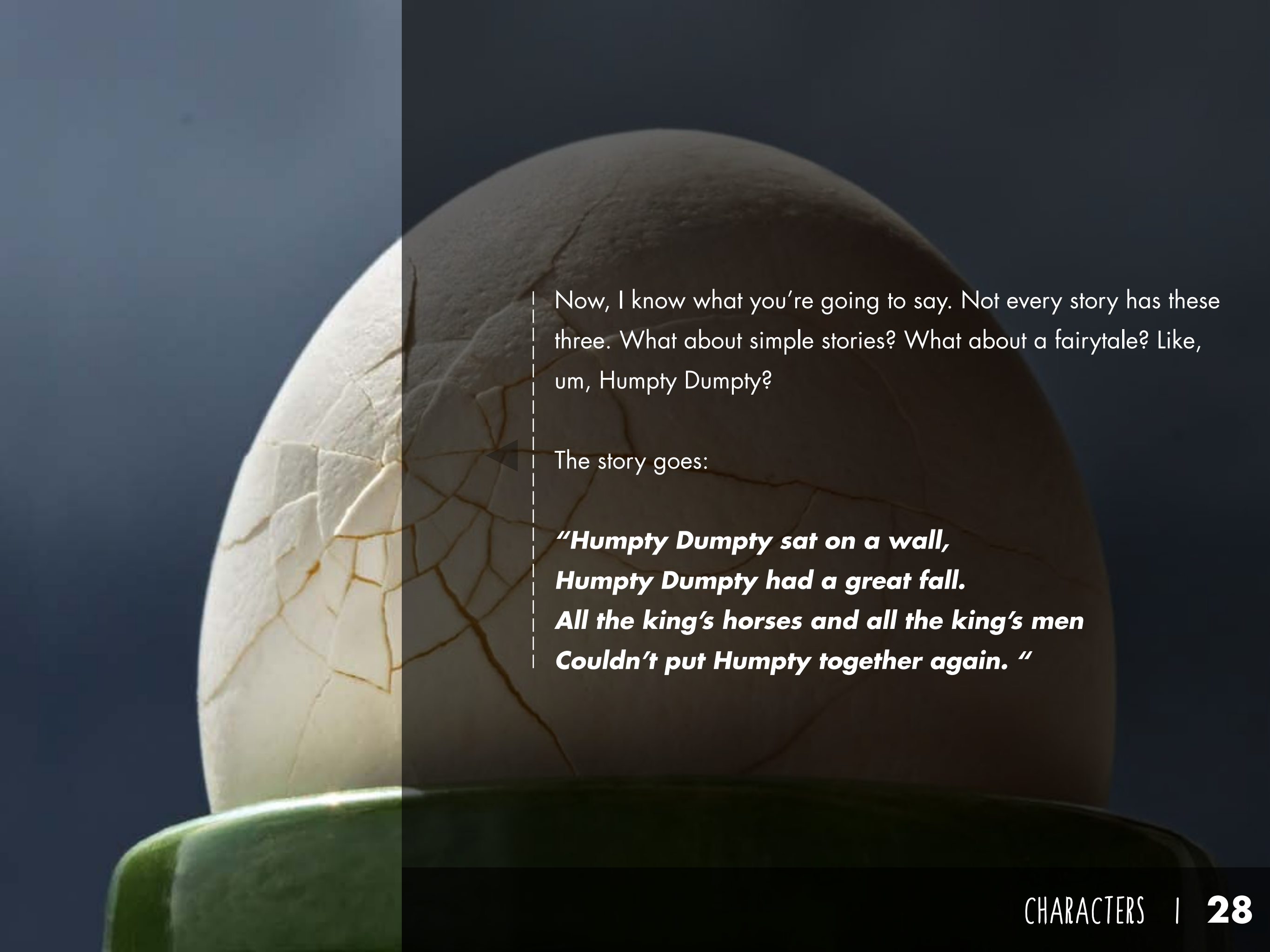


In 1968, Dr. Stephen Karpman wrote an article entitled "Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis." This article included what is today known as the Karpman Drama Triangle. This triangle, illustrated above, is made up of three elements: The Persecutor, The Rescuer and The Victim.

The persecutor, or Villain, is the character in stories that attempts to coerce or attack the victim. The victim is oftentimes the recipient of torment or distress caused by the persecutor and must be saved and protected by the rescuer, or Hero. It is up to the rescuer to intervene between the persecutor and victim in order to bring balance.

Now, the Karpman Drama Triangle is mostly used for psychological purposes. However, we have chosen this model to illustrate the characters in storytelling because it provides a visual, scientific reference.

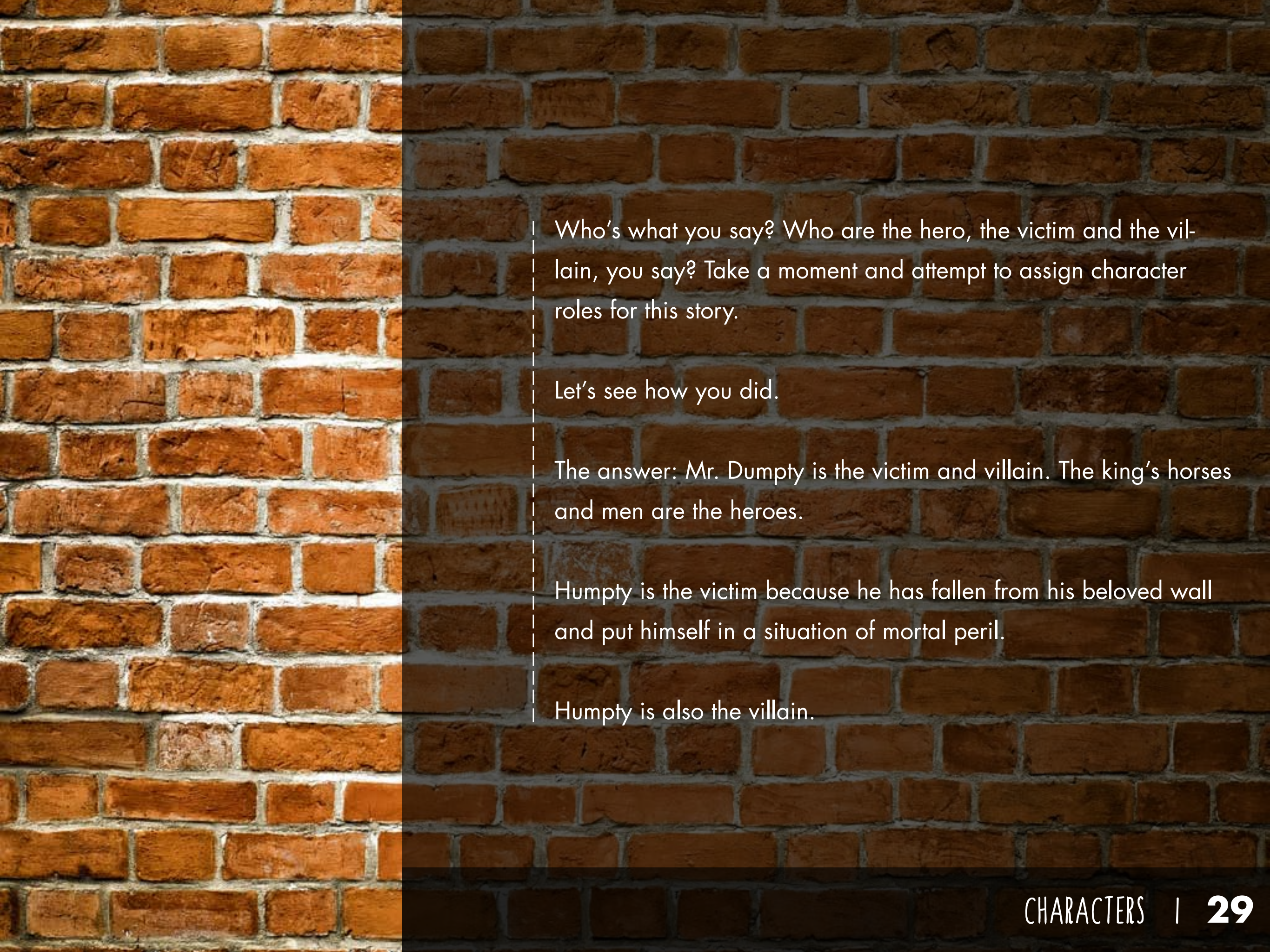
For our purposes, we will only use the Hero (Rescuer) and the Villain (Persecutor) as well as the previously mentioned Storyteller.

A close-up photograph of a cracked egg. The egg is positioned diagonally, with its pointed end at the bottom left. The left side of the egg is white and shows a network of fine, golden-brown cracks. The right side is a dark, almost black, smooth surface. The egg rests on a green, textured surface, possibly a piece of fabric or a container. The background is a solid, dark blue-grey color.

Now, I know what you're going to say. Not every story has these three. What about simple stories? What about a fairytale? Like, um, Humpty Dumpty?

◀ The story goes:

***"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again."***



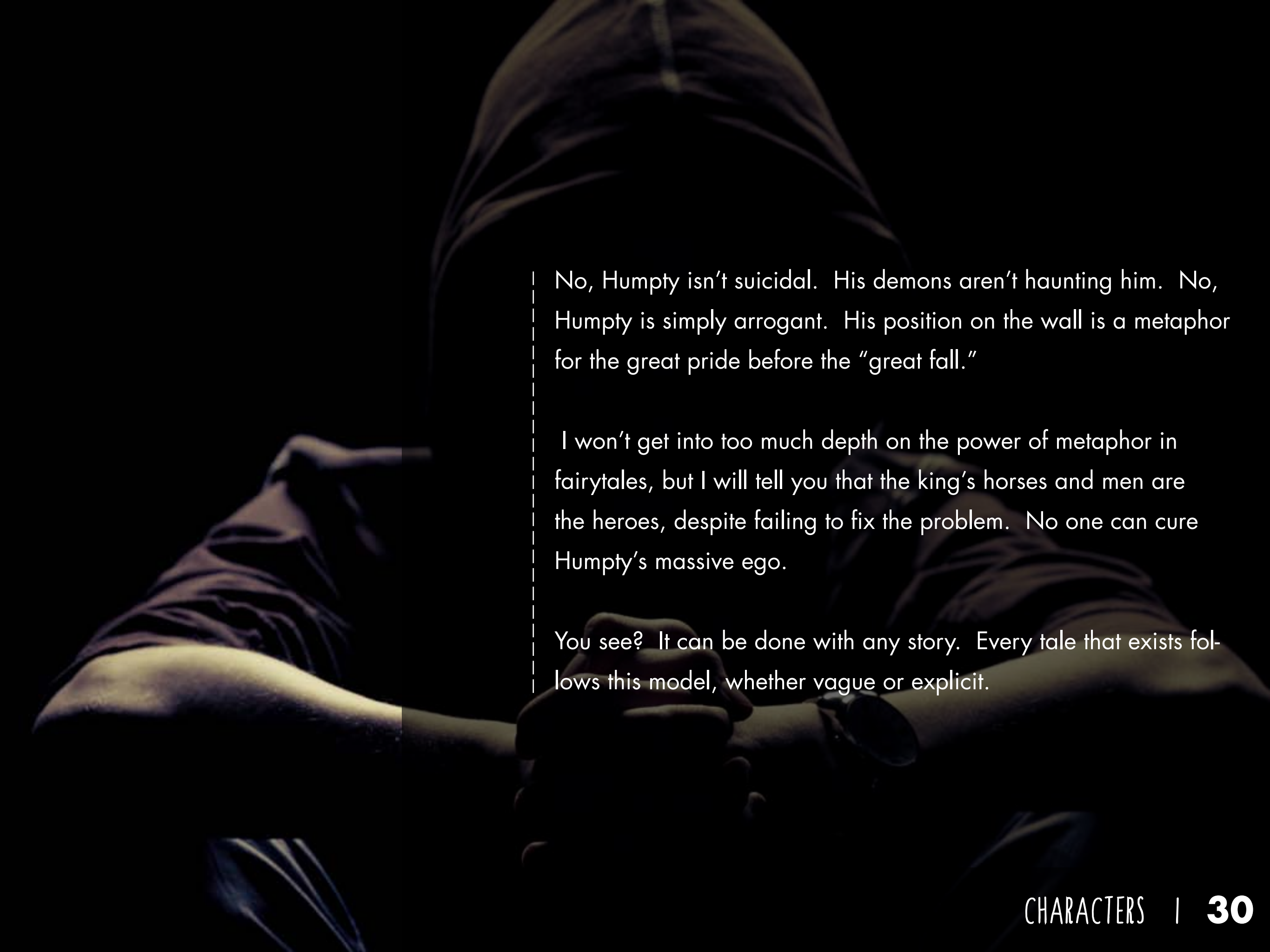
Who's what you say? Who are the hero, the victim and the villain, you say? Take a moment and attempt to assign character roles for this story.

Let's see how you did.

The answer: Mr. Dumpty is the victim and villain. The king's horses and men are the heroes.

Humpty is the victim because he has fallen from his beloved wall and put himself in a situation of mortal peril.

Humpty is also the villain.

A person wearing a dark hoodie is shown from the chest up, with their head buried in their hands in a gesture of despair or exhaustion. The background is dark and moody, with some light reflecting off the fabric of the hoodie and the person's skin.

No, Humpty isn't suicidal. His demons aren't haunting him. No, Humpty is simply arrogant. His position on the wall is a metaphor for the great pride before the "great fall."

I won't get into too much depth on the power of metaphor in fairytales, but I will tell you that the king's horses and men are the heroes, despite failing to fix the problem. No one can cure Humpty's massive ego.

You see? It can be done with any story. Every tale that exists follows this model, whether vague or explicit.



Take a look at the diagram again. Do you notice how the triangle is upside down? The Villain and the Hero are on top, battling each other for the sake of the victim. The victim, while seemingly unimportant to the other two characters, gives them purpose. Without something to fight for, the Hero and Villain would have no reason to face-off. The role of the victim is essential in understanding classic storytelling.

However, in this book we classify you as the storyteller, your audience as the hero and the problem as the villain.

So, now that we have set up the general scope of the characters, let's get started actually telling the story. It's time to put ideas into action and tell a story that will inspire the heroes in us all.

The Storyteller



THE FIRST LAW OF STORY-TELLING. EVERY MAN IS
BOUND TO LEAVE A STORY BETTER THAN HE FOUND IT.

Mrs. Humphrey Ward



Who is a storyteller?

The old man in the rocking chair. The writer, the director, the musician. Your gossipy next-door neighbor.

These are all storytellers.

The storyteller has the power to change the direction and message of the story. You set the stage, lay out the characters and move the story along. You are the bridge between imagination and creation. You are essential to the audience's understanding of the plot, the central theme and the call to action. Without your guidance, the audience wouldn't know their role in the story. They wouldn't know the problem. They wouldn't know anything!



A good storyteller transforms a run-of-the-mill tale into an adventure, an experience for their audience. A crowd wants to experience firsthand the events taking place, the characters interacting and the struggle between the villain and the hero. In order to feel suspense, they must feel involved. As a storyteller, you can impact how your audience receives the message, no matter what topic you address.

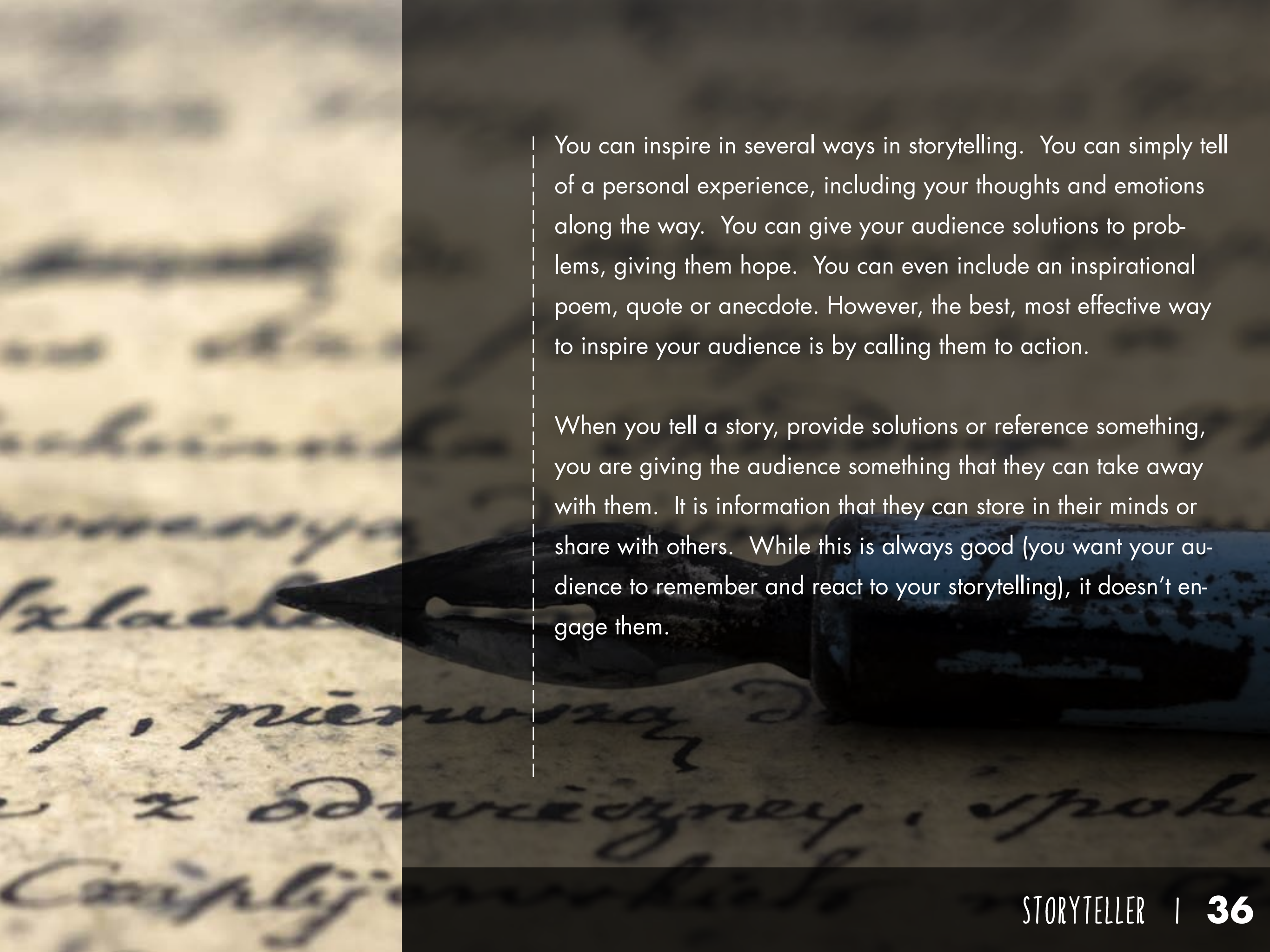
Remember, the only way your audience knows the story is through you. I know what you're thinking. But, what if they have heard the story before? A story is independent of its vehicle. Every presenter or storyteller has the ability to enhance, enrich, transform or alter a story simply by telling it in his or her own way. Keep this in mind as you tell your next story.



You, as the storyteller, will essentially set the scene, characterize the various components, address the problem and finally present the hero as an alternative to the villain's ways. You play a key role in the actual story as well. The way you present information in your story is directly related to the actions your audience takes as the hero in their own stories.

So, how do you become a great storyteller?

It's not as simple as you may think. It's not about being suave or charismatic, or even about being informative. It's about inspiration. It's about leaving your audience different than they were before your influence. Your purpose is to alter their outlook and to create a sense of urgency in them that sticks with them long after the presentation.

A close-up photograph of a dark-colored fountain pen lying horizontally across a piece of aged, yellowed paper. The paper is covered in elegant, flowing cursive handwriting in dark ink. The pen's nib is visible on the left side, pointing towards the left edge of the frame. The lighting is soft, creating a warm, vintage atmosphere. The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the pen and the texture of the paper.

You can inspire in several ways in storytelling. You can simply tell of a personal experience, including your thoughts and emotions along the way. You can give your audience solutions to problems, giving them hope. You can even include an inspirational poem, quote or anecdote. However, the best, most effective way to inspire your audience is by calling them to action.

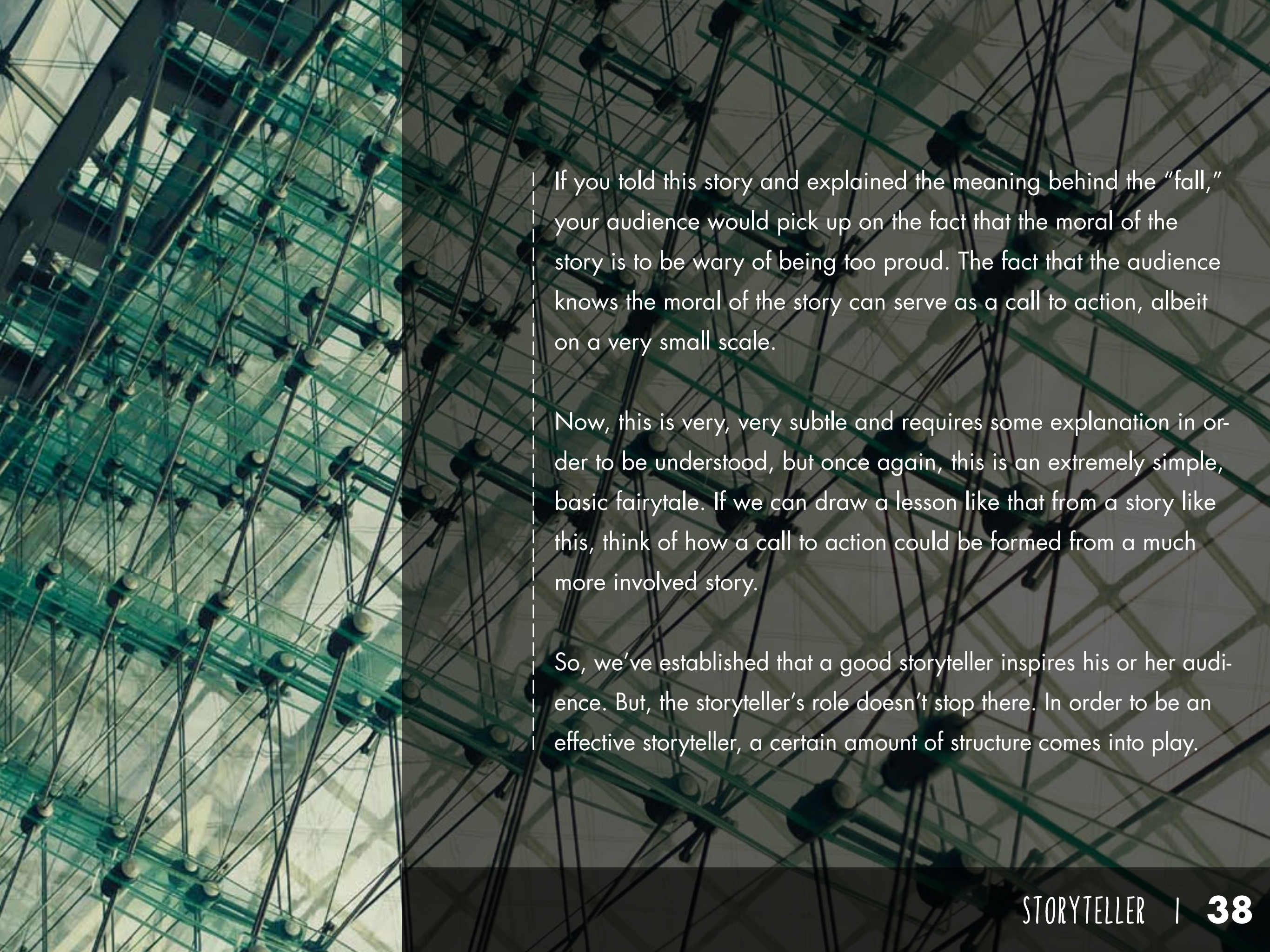
When you tell a story, provide solutions or reference something, you are giving the audience something that they can take away with them. It is information that they can store in their minds or share with others. While this is always good (you want your audience to remember and react to your storytelling), it doesn't engage them.



When you prompt your audience to take some sort of action, you are letting them actively pursue a concept that you have introduced to them. This means that you are providing a sense of independence and imagination. Your mission gives them purpose as opposed to simply giving them information or direction.

In terms of storytelling, a call to action doesn't mean you literally tell them to do something. It can mean including a subtle theme in the presentation that stands out and evokes thought from the audience.

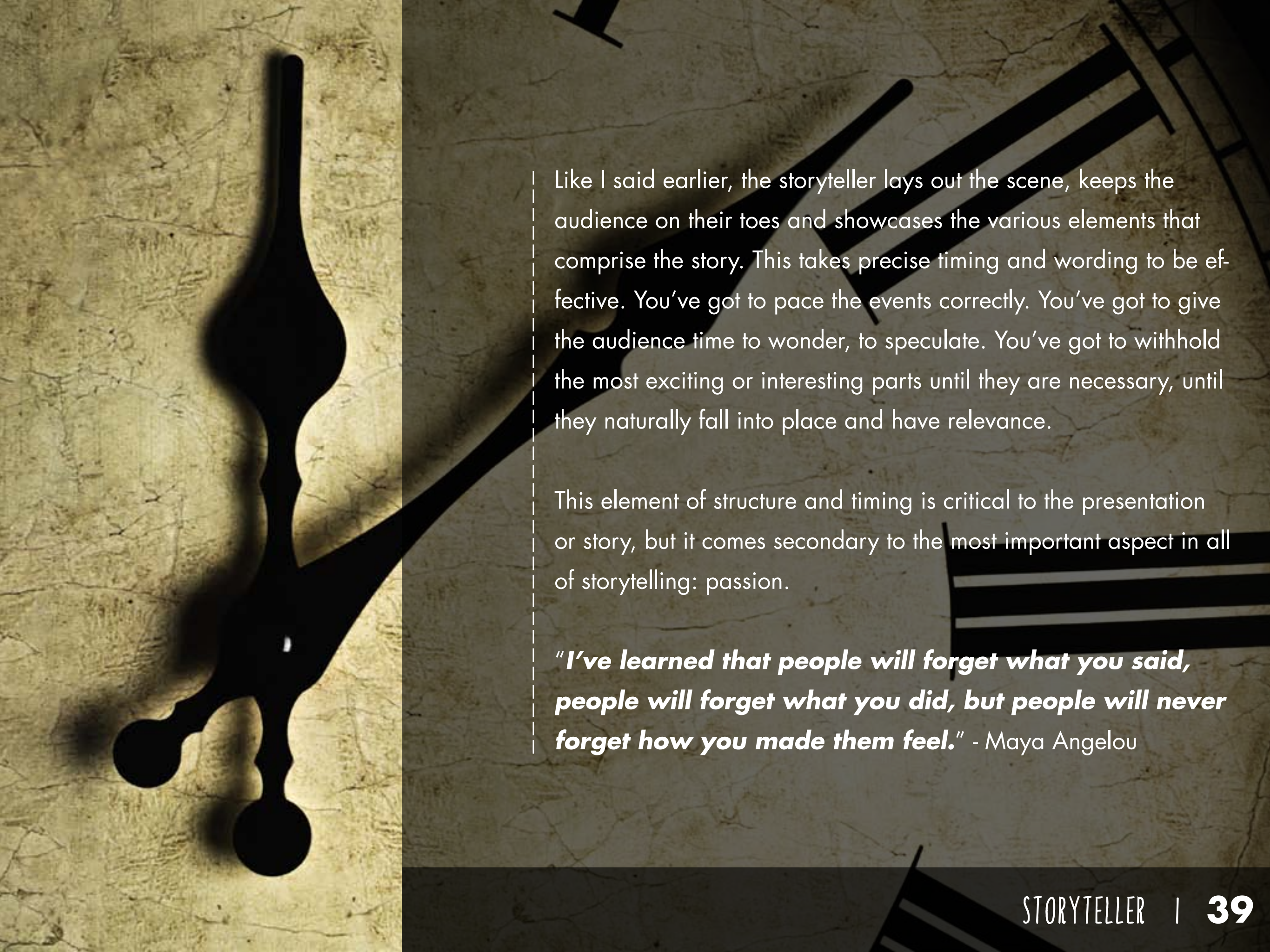
For example, in the Humpty Dumpty fairytale, the line after Humpty falls says that they couldn't put him back together again. So, where's the call to action?



If you told this story and explained the meaning behind the “fall,” your audience would pick up on the fact that the moral of the story is to be wary of being too proud. The fact that the audience knows the moral of the story can serve as a call to action, albeit on a very small scale.

Now, this is very, very subtle and requires some explanation in order to be understood, but once again, this is an extremely simple, basic fairytale. If we can draw a lesson like that from a story like this, think of how a call to action could be formed from a much more involved story.

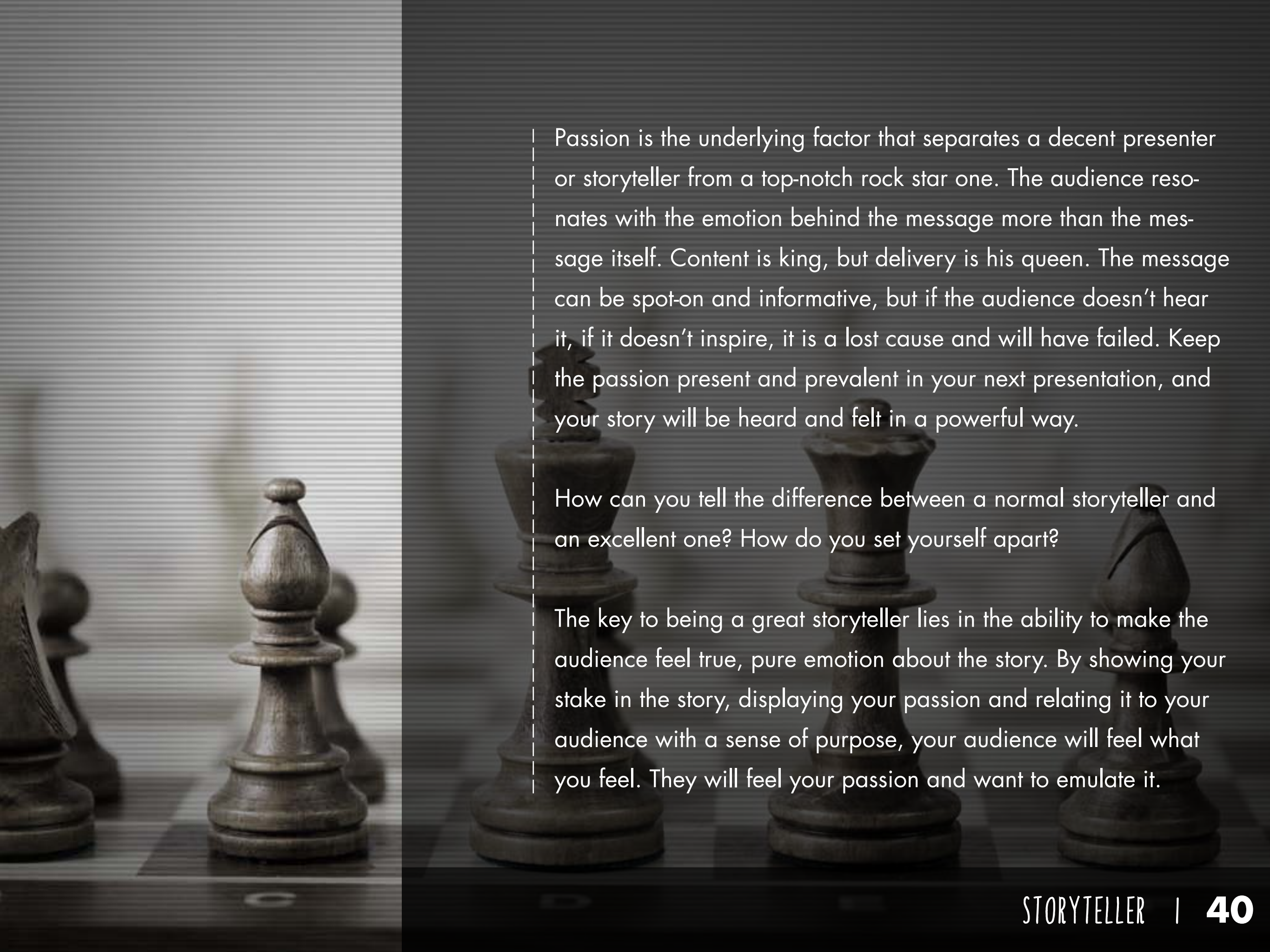
So, we’ve established that a good storyteller inspires his or her audience. But, the storyteller’s role doesn’t stop there. In order to be an effective storyteller, a certain amount of structure comes into play.



Like I said earlier, the storyteller lays out the scene, keeps the audience on their toes and showcases the various elements that comprise the story. This takes precise timing and wording to be effective. You've got to pace the events correctly. You've got to give the audience time to wonder, to speculate. You've got to withhold the most exciting or interesting parts until they are necessary, until they naturally fall into place and have relevance.

This element of structure and timing is critical to the presentation or story, but it comes secondary to the most important aspect in all of storytelling: passion.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou



Passion is the underlying factor that separates a decent presenter or storyteller from a top-notch rock star one. The audience resonates with the emotion behind the message more than the message itself. Content is king, but delivery is his queen. The message can be spot-on and informative, but if the audience doesn't hear it, if it doesn't inspire, it is a lost cause and will have failed. Keep the passion present and prevalent in your next presentation, and your story will be heard and felt in a powerful way.

How can you tell the difference between a normal storyteller and an excellent one? How do you set yourself apart?

The key to being a great storyteller lies in the ability to make the audience feel true, pure emotion about the story. By showing your stake in the story, displaying your passion and relating it to your audience with a sense of purpose, your audience will feel what you feel. They will feel your passion and want to emulate it.



For instance, when a normal storyteller tells a story, he hits all the points and makes his case to the audience. He covers the basics and even teaches you a few things. He appeals to logic because that is what he perceives as the best route to teach. You walk away feeling informed. It wasn't a waste of time necessarily, but there wasn't anything spectacular about it.


Now, a great storyteller uses his time to craft a story that will truly impact your emotions. He builds characters, weaves subplots, and creates suspense to teach you lessons. He appeals to your feelings because he knows that humans want to learn from examples. Stories are creative, living examples of concepts. He can clearly and directly approach these concepts through stories. You walk away feeling moved and inspired. He has given you things to think about, and stories to remember. You feel like you know him as a person. You feel that you've been immersed in an experience, and you are excited to get started on your next adventure.



Let's use an example.

So, say you're in a packed courtroom full of eager listeners. The case is a serious one involving murder. In order to prove that the defendant is guilty, the prosecutor calls to the stand the pathologist who did the autopsy. The doctor stands in front of the jury and gives the raw facts, the medical details of the incident. Then, the defense attorney rises and turns to the jurors and pleads the case against his client. He tells of his defendant's life, of his record as a family man and an outstanding member of the community. He talks about the man's personality and lifestyle with passion and gusto.

Now, who would be more convincing to you, the doctor or the lawyer?

The background of the page is a photograph showing the silhouettes of a crowd of people against a bright, orange-hued sunset sky. Several individuals are holding up flags, which are also silhouetted against the light. The scene conveys a sense of collective action or celebration.

The doctor appeals to logic, while the lawyer appeals to emotion. The people in the courtroom as well as the jurors have been touched and convinced that this man is like them, possibly better than most people, even. Now, we're not going to try and solve this case, but strictly based on the styles of the two, we can clearly see that the lawyer is more of a storyteller, while the doctor is your average presenter.

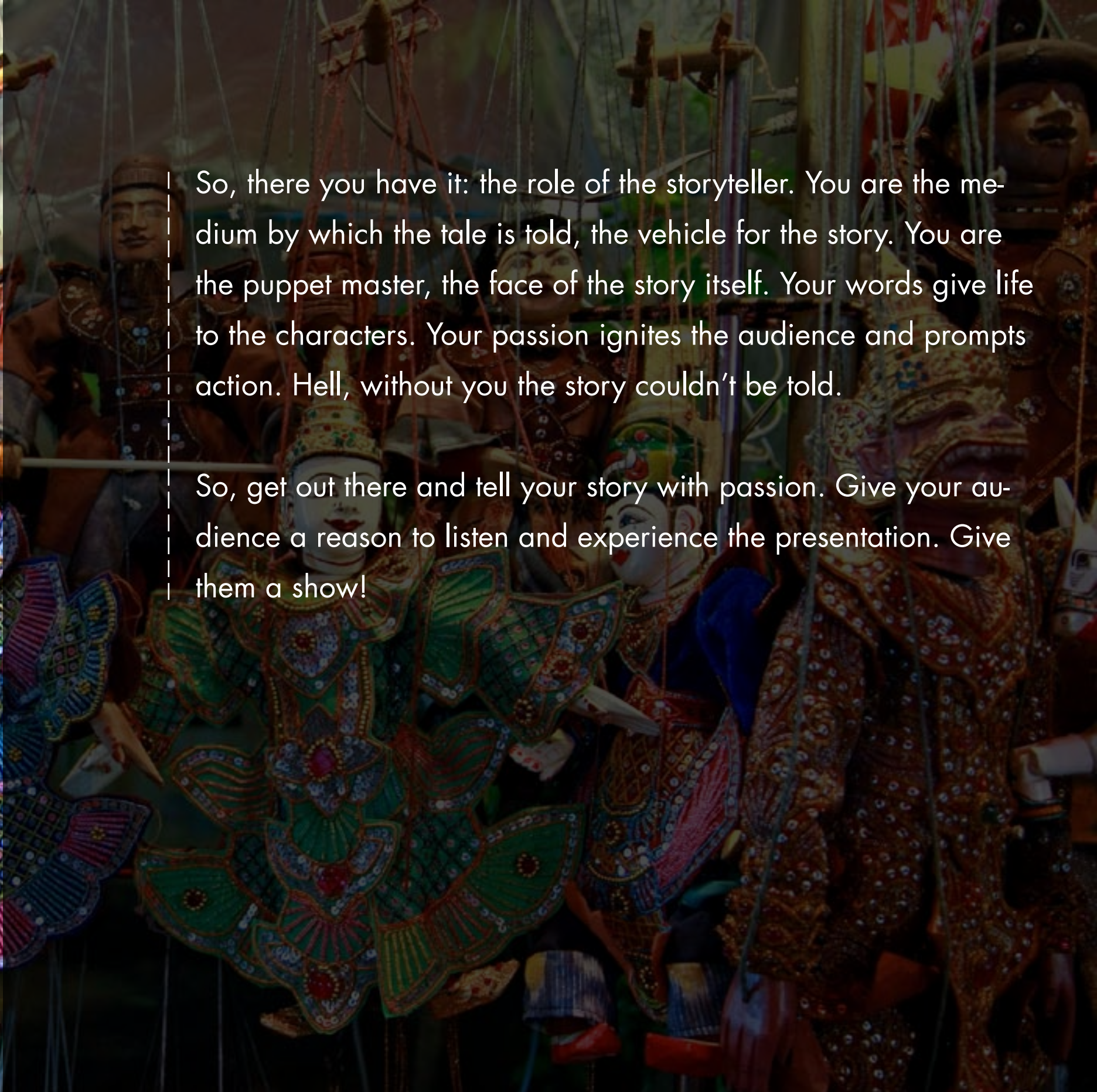
Who do you want to emulate in your next presentation?

It takes skill and practice to be a great storyteller, but anyone can do it. It's all about showing your passion and appealing to your audience's feelings. You have to sympathize with your audience, and they will sympathize with you in return.



So, there you have it: the role of the storyteller. You are the medium by which the tale is told, the vehicle for the story. You are the puppet master, the face of the story itself. Your words give life to the characters. Your passion ignites the audience and prompts action. Hell, without you the story couldn't be told.

So, get out there and tell your story with passion. Give your audience a reason to listen and experience the presentation. Give them a show!



The Villain

AS THERE IS A USE IN MEDICINE FOR POISONS,
SO THE WORLD CANNOT MOVE WITHOUT ROGUES.

Ralph Waldo Emerson



He's ruthless. He's cunning. He lurks in the shadows. He gives lengthy monologues about taking over the world...

We all know this character. The Villain.

The Villain is a mastermind of plot twists and evil schemes. He has many purposes in many different stories. He wants to destroy, control or terrorize something or someone. He has a motive, but that motive is oftentimes driven by the desire to overcome an opposing force.

Here's where you come in.

The Storyteller's job is to provide the audience (the Hero) with a problem to overcome and then to inspire them to take action and defeat the Villain. Without the Hero, the Villain will surely win, vanquishing any hope for the dire situation at hand. All will be lost.



However, in many stories there exists a very subtle and slightly unusual concept. Without the Hero, the Villain oftentimes becomes deflated in his passion for dominance. Just as the Hero fights to defeat the Villain, the Villain himself fights because he wants to defeat the Hero. The Villain needs the Hero in order to persist.

So, what does this mean to you?

Well, in terms of storytelling, it is your job to lay out the possibilities that lie between the Hero and the Villain, then address the confrontation between them and finally pose a resolution to your Hero.

In terms of a presentation, your audience, (the Hero) is faced with a problem, whether that is overcoming a bad habit, learning about a specific issue, or receiving instruction. There are infinite possibilities when it comes to which problem is being faced, but your methods of presenting this problem will never change.



A problem presented to an audience gives them something to fight for, something to overcome. It gives them a sense of purpose and drive to succeed. Without a problem to overcome, they would lack the motivation to accomplish a goal. It would seem easy to succeed, which is a false proposition in almost every facet of life. Give them a common enemy, and they will have something to propel them toward success, toward victory.

Despite the evil nature of the Villain, he is absolutely crucial to any story that's worth hearing. A sense of mystery and suspense has been created simply because he exists. The audience is forever concerned for the livelihoods of the "good" characters because the "evil" ones still might succeed. These feelings evoke action.



We all want the good-natured, kind-hearted figures to prevail over whatever problem they face, even if it is an imaginary one. There is something inside us all that keeps our hearts connected to the hearts of our heroes. We want to protect them, to warn them and to encourage them.

Why?

Because they are fighting for something in which we also believe. They fight for the things that we want, and we will always be on their side. They are the men and women and ideas that symbolize or embody our desires, hopes and dreams.

They are our heroes.

The Hero

THE HERO IS ONE WHO KINDLES A GREAT LIGHT IN THE WORLD,
WHO SETS UP BLAZING TORCHES IN THE DARK STREETS
OF LIFE FOR MEN TO SEE BY.

Felix Adler



There are many heroes throughout life, whether real or imaginary. They possess different heroic qualities, but they share a common characteristic. They fight for something. They protect the innocent. They combat evil forces that threaten their beliefs or ideals.

A hero is a powerful, oftentimes dominant, force in a story. He or she can be used to portray qualities that the Storyteller deem necessary and appropriate in combating the problem in the story.

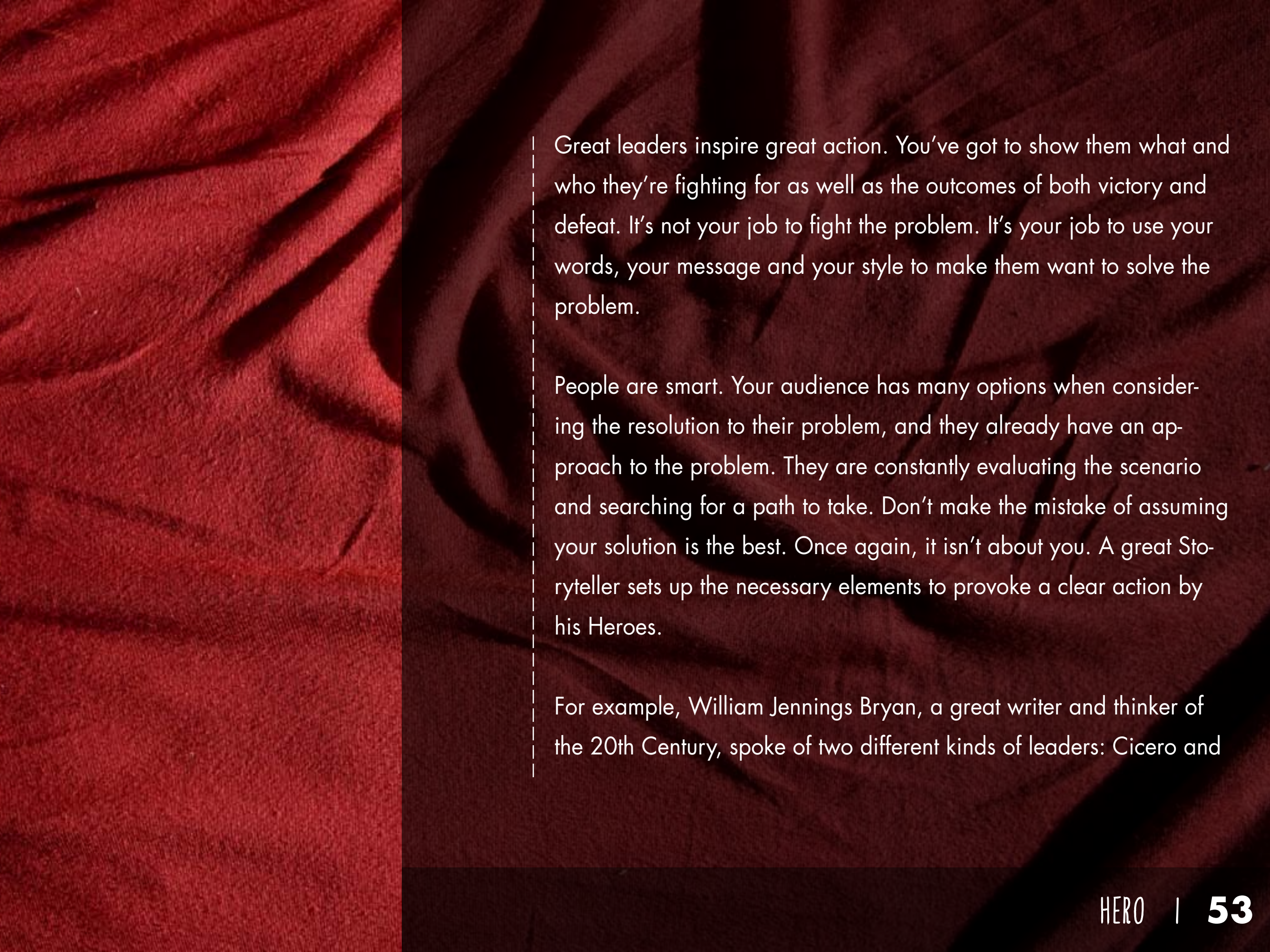
As we mentioned earlier, in terms of presenting, your audience is the Hero. As the Storyteller, your job is to empower the Hero to defeat the Villain. In essence, you must convince, inform or inspire the audience enough to solve the problem. No matter the situation, the Hero is always fighting to defend the victim, while simultaneously defeating the Villain.



Without the Hero, the Villain is free to reign down mercilessly on not only the victim, but also the world in which the story takes place. It can be more than just a simple one-on-one battle of will and strength, and it oftentimes is. The bulk of any story involves the Hero having the toughest job of all. He's juggling hardships, while the Villain has only one target in his mission.

When presenting, remember what we said earlier about giving the audience or the Hero, a purpose in their mission. The Storyteller is only the medium by which the Hero receives any content. You must provide your Heroes with key information and inspiring delivery, or the story will not unfold, the Villain will win and all will be lost.

So, how do you empower your audience?
How do they become Heroes?



Great leaders inspire great action. You've got to show them what and who they're fighting for as well as the outcomes of both victory and defeat. It's not your job to fight the problem. It's your job to use your words, your message and your style to make them want to solve the problem.

People are smart. Your audience has many options when considering the resolution to their problem, and they already have an approach to the problem. They are constantly evaluating the scenario and searching for a path to take. Don't make the mistake of assuming your solution is the best. Once again, it isn't about you. A great Storyteller sets up the necessary elements to provoke a clear action by his Heroes.

For example, William Jennings Bryan, a great writer and thinker of the 20th Century, spoke of two different kinds of leaders: Cicero and



Demosthenes. In his book "In His Image," he writes, "When Cicero spoke the people said, 'How well Cicero speaks.' When Demosthenes spoke his hearers cried, 'Let us go against Phillip.'" Demosthenes used his words to create a movement, while Cicero was simply a talented orator. It's a clash between actual leadership and the illusion of leadership.


Don't be Cicero. Be Demosthenes. Your presentation will rouse the Hero in all who listen to you speak. Your audience will transform into real Heroes, and they will be loyal to the cause. They will defeat the Villain.

A true Hero can change the course of events in a story and be crucial to the outcome, but there is yet another element that is vital to any story. It is what compels your audience to keep listening. It drives them to become a Hero, but it also maintains the story you tell.

What is it? You'll have to keep reading to find out.

Suspense





“The courage to imagine the otherwise is our greatest resource, adding color and suspense to all our life.”


— Daniel J. Boorstin

See what we did there?

sus·pense/s spens/

Noun:

- 1.** A state or feeling of excited or anxious uncertainty about what may happen.
- 2.** A quality in a work of fiction that arouses excited expectation or uncertainty about what may happen.



Suspense isn't easy. It takes patience and clever craftsmanship. It means carefully and steadily adding and subtracting pieces of information in order to arouse curiosity and heightened expectation. It is rare to create and maintain a sharp, engaging sense of suspense in any story, but it is well worth the effort once your audience is fully immersed in the feeling.

In most cases, suspense is weaved into the storyline from the get-go. The protagonist is involved in a series of events that are often left unexplained until later on. This creates a chain of suspense, which is then tied into the primary suspenseful event occurring near the climax of the story. Once you have reached the full potential of the suspense, you essentially have the audience at your mercy.



A presentation is a great chance to use suspense because it is a show. You are showcasing information and passion to deliver an overarching message, which means you have full control over the timing and nature of the reveal. As you tell your story, present the problem and propose a solution, a paced dose of suspense increases the value of every aspect of your presentation. Your audience is hanging on the hinges of your structure, waiting for more information, which makes the reveal that much more enjoyable and valuable to them.

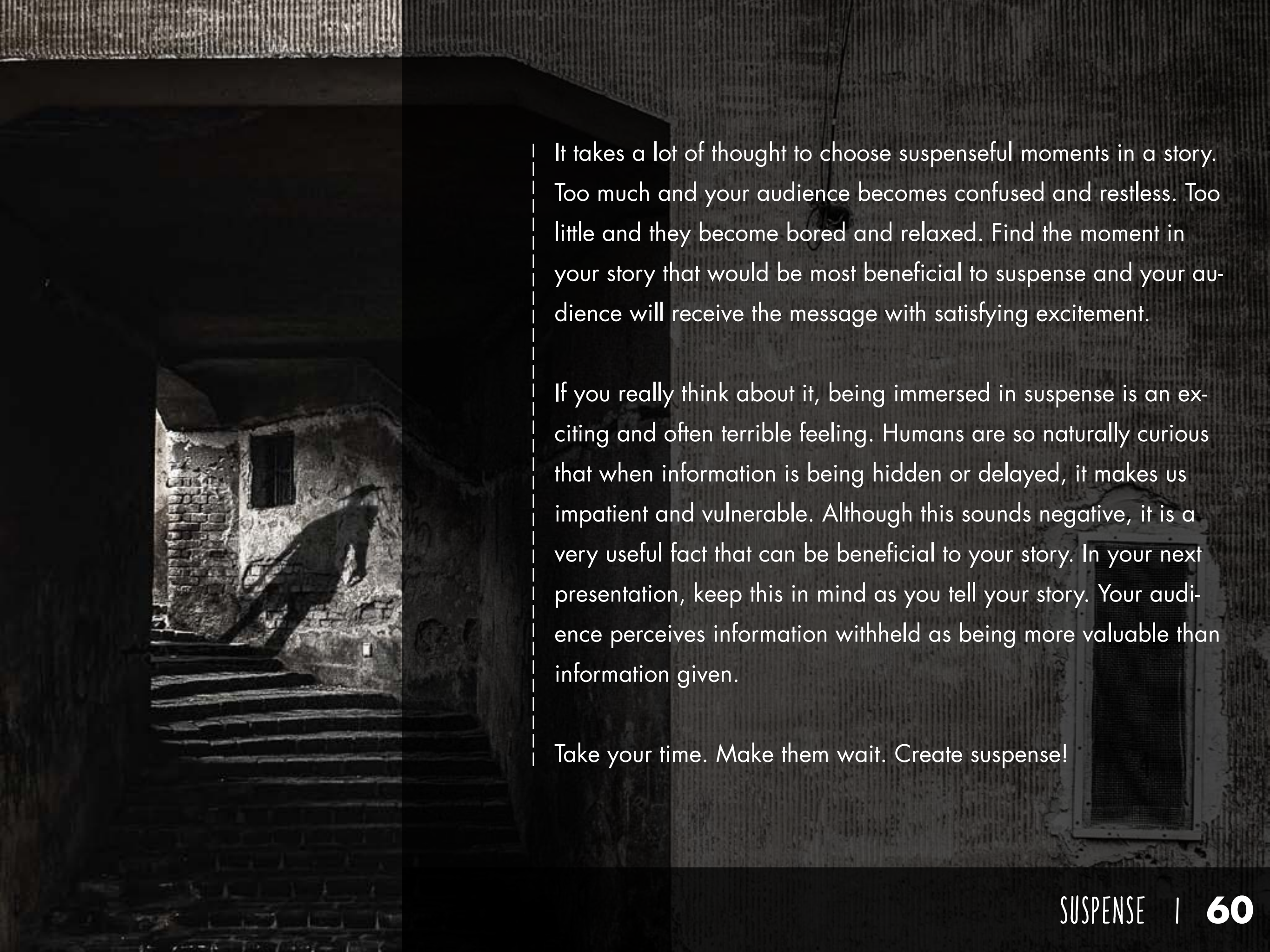
So, how do you create suspense?

Unlike other aspects of storytelling, suspense is unique in its creation. The process involves specific timing of the release of information, which depends on the subject matter. However, there is a basic method for weaving suspense into your story.



First of all, the general rule of thumb for suspense is simply the withholding of information from your audience. By keeping your audience in the dark for a certain amount of time, the information becomes very interesting even though it has not even been revealed. Keep your audience on their toes by making them wonder; their imaginations will run wild. They will seek an answer to the mystery in front of them, which you will provide. Without suspense, the audience wouldn't have to work or wait for the information, which makes it less valuable.

Secondly, in order to create a proper sense of suspense, you must gauge the level of suspense needed for that piece of information. For example, you wouldn't keep the identity of your main character a secret unless it was important to the plot...



It takes a lot of thought to choose suspenseful moments in a story. Too much and your audience becomes confused and restless. Too little and they become bored and relaxed. Find the moment in your story that would be most beneficial to suspense and your audience will receive the message with satisfying excitement.


If you really think about it, being immersed in suspense is an exciting and often terrible feeling. Humans are so naturally curious that when information is being hidden or delayed, it makes us impatient and vulnerable. Although this sounds negative, it is a very useful fact that can be beneficial to your story. In your next presentation, keep this in mind as you tell your story. Your audience perceives information withheld as being more valuable than information given.

Take your time. Make them wait. Create suspense!

Presenting

AN EXPERIENCE






So, we've made it to our final chapter in this adventure we call storytelling.

We've laid out the main characters and all their roles in telling a great story. We've seen how important suspense is and the dynamics of the audience. Now, let's take one last look at the other side of storytelling: audience engagement.

Our motto at Big Fish Presentations is that "We Turn Presentations into Experiences" for audiences. We believe that every presentation doesn't have to be about simply relaying bits of information to a crowd of people. It's not about putting numbers and charts on a screen and reading to your audience. It's not just about stellar design, either. Design is a great tool in telling stories because it enhances the experience and eases the flow of information. However, the heart of a great presentation is in the way you tell the story and the impact you have on your audience.

A professional microphone on a stand is positioned in the foreground, slightly to the left. The background is a blurred room with warm, golden light sources, creating a bokeh effect. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image, separated from the microphone by a vertical dashed line.

You are on a stage or in front of a crowd because you have something that people want to hear. You possess a fresh idea that can change how people view the world. Your words and actions have the potential to alter the perceptions of the people who listen to you. When you have everyone's complete attention, your story can capture their hearts and minds. Your story can lead to action, to real change in the world. Use this moment to fully engage and inspire the people around you.

Do you want people to walk away from your presentation with a few interesting facts, or do you want to truly impact the way they feel when they leave the room?

It all comes back to stories. Like we've discussed, people crave stories because it gives them a chance to be immersed in an alternate experience than that of reality. When people listen to a story, they temporarily disconnect from their lives and live in their imagination.



It's important to realize that as you tell your story to people, you are directing them into an experience. You are building a place where the audience can feel, breathe, touch, taste and see things that can transform their perception of reality.

If you want to actually resonate with your audience, work your hardest to produce a story that is worth telling. Create an experience that informs, teaches, excites and inspires the hearts and minds of the people around you. Once you succeed, you have done something that is truly worth praising.

You have presented an experience.



bigfishpresentations.com

10889 Perkins Rd., Suite D
Baton Rouge, LA 70810

P: 225.317.9444

E: hq@bigfishpresentations.com