THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

Humanizing Our Work, Our Communities, Ourselves
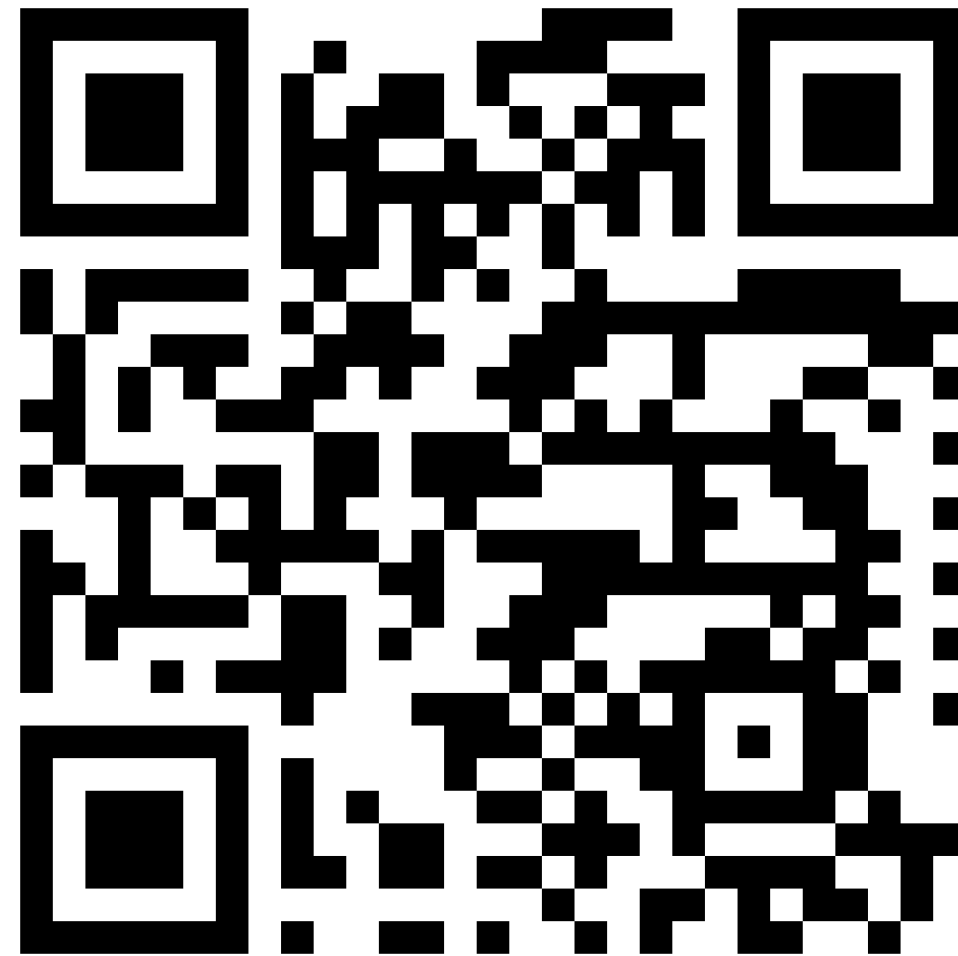
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with Kory M. Shrum

What Will Happen

- Kory's background
- Creativity/myths
- Story elements
- Humanizing data/metrics
- Freebies
- Q&A
- Limiting beliefs (bonus round if time)

Download your worksheet packet!

www.awellcaredforhuman.com/conference

Set Your Intention

By the end of this workshop, I hope to...

Possible keywords:
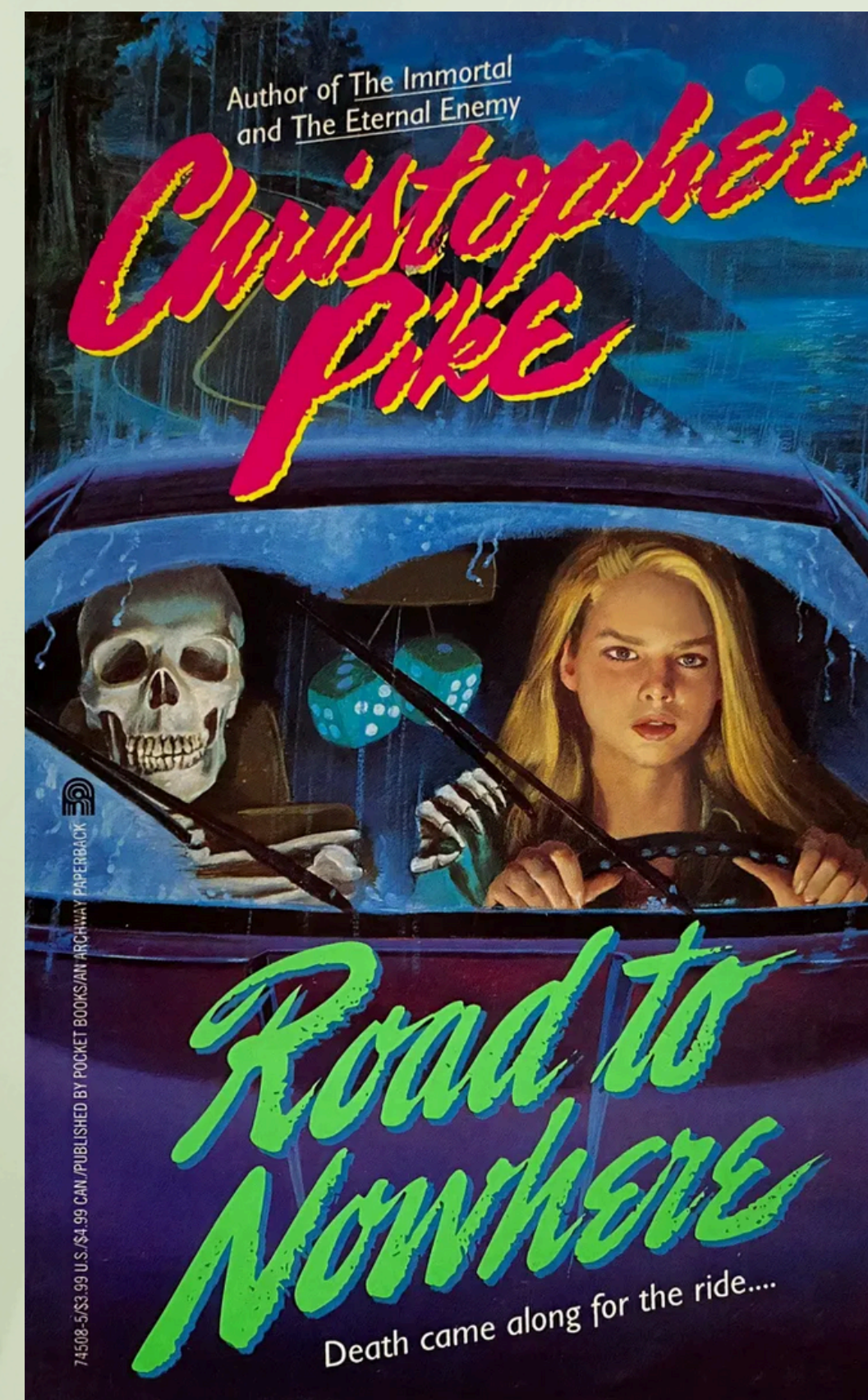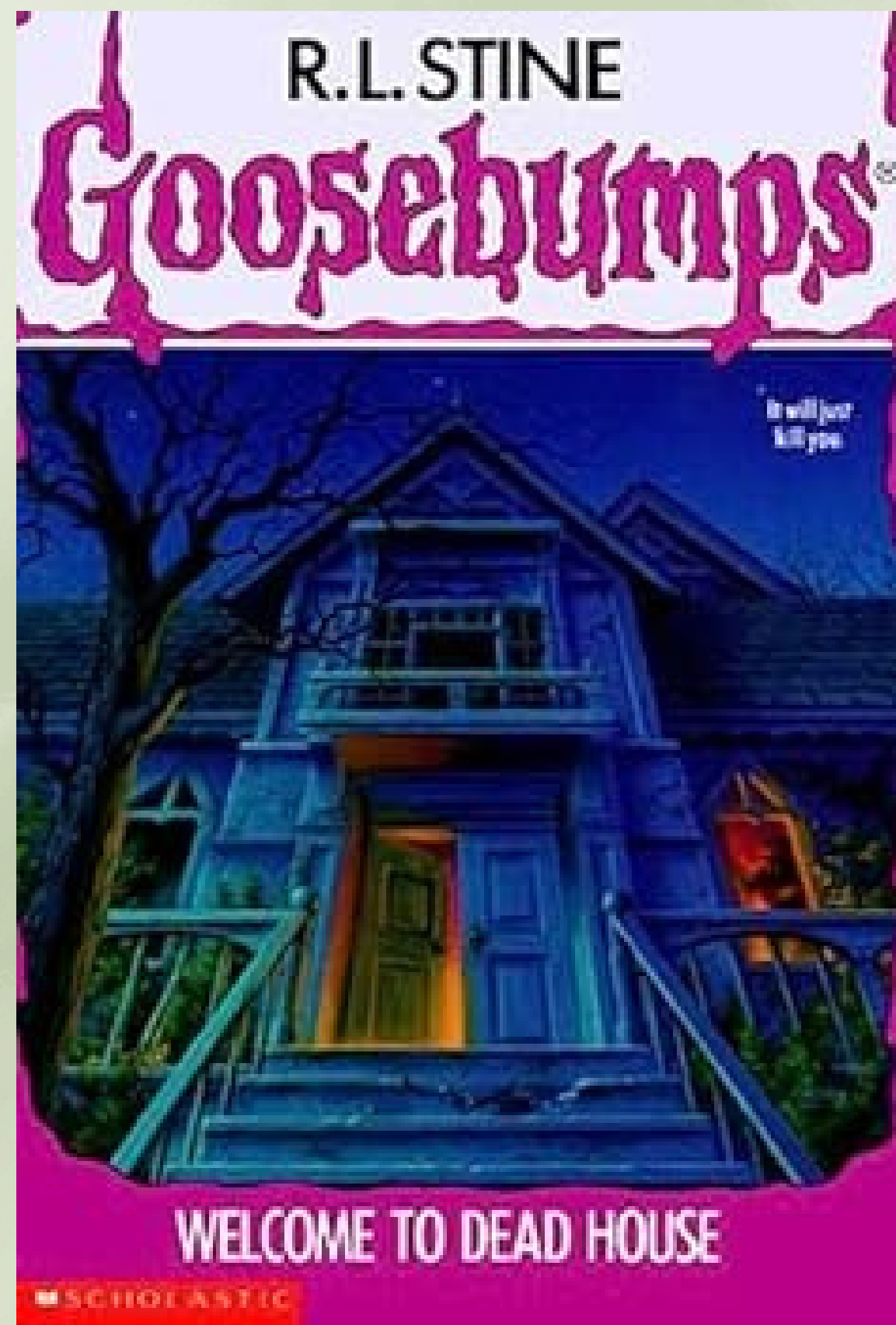learn, improve, understand, gain, try...

Storytelling Background

- M.A. and M.F.A.
- 33+ books
- 2 podcasts
- 10+ years as writing professor
- Communications Director for Community Conservation

R.L. STINE

Goosebumps

He walks.
He stalks...

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DUMMY

SCHOLASTIC

R.L. STINE

Goosebumps

It will just
kill you

WELCOME TO DEAD HOUSE

SCHOLASTIC

Author of *The Immortal*
and *The Eternal Enemy*

CHRISTOPHER PIKE

Road to Nowhere

Death came along for the ride....

5. Sheet Music
AP - ATA

13. Sheet Music
BL - BOM

21. Sheet Music
CHAMBER MUSIC

6. Sheet Music
ATH - BAR

14. Sheet Music

22. Sheet Music
CHAMBER MUSIC

7. Sheet Music
J.S. - M

15. Sheet Music
BRAI - BUC

23. Sheet Music
CHE - CHI

8. Sheet Music
BALLA - M

16. Sheet Music
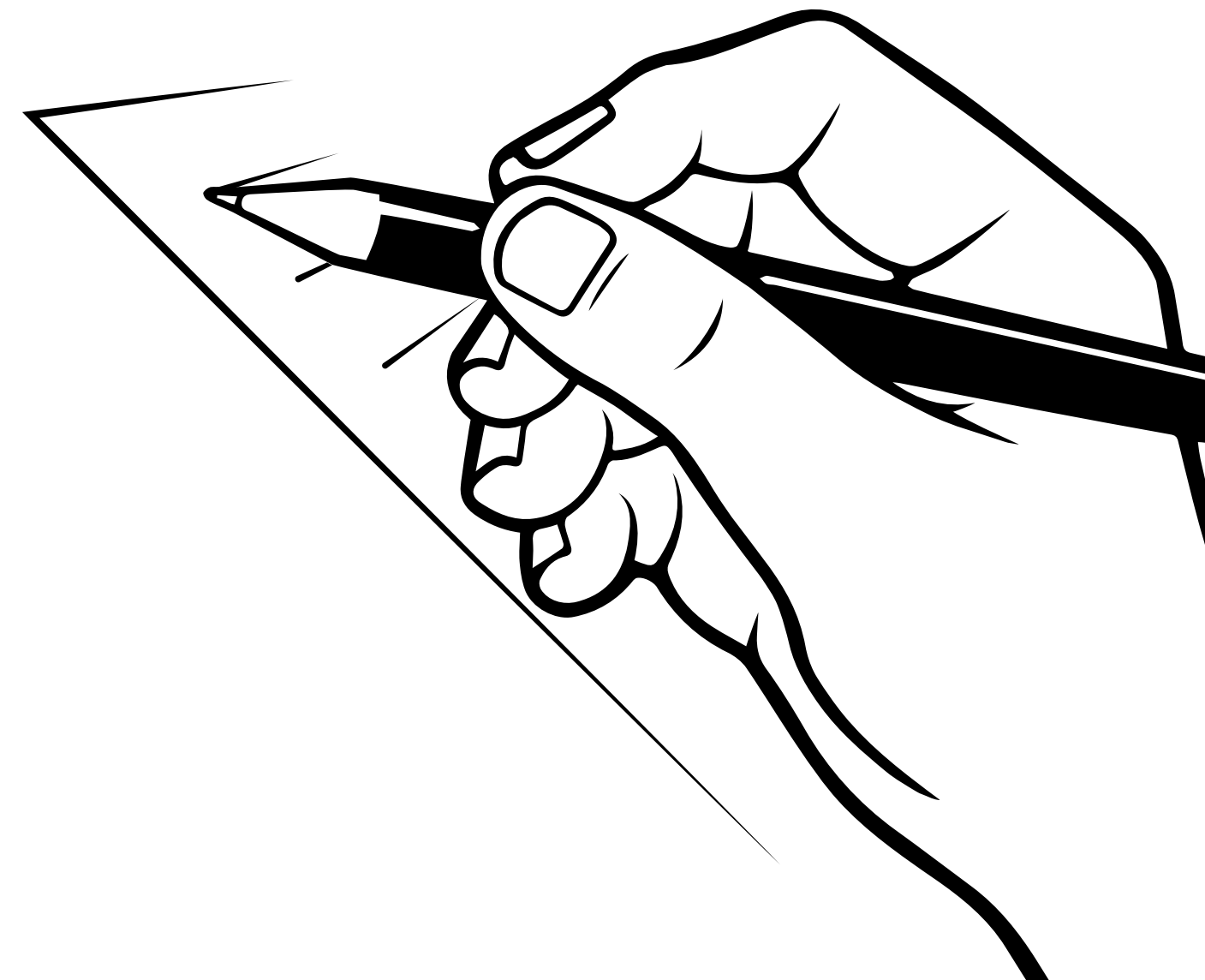BUD - CAF

24. Sheet Music
CHO -

Stories are POWERFUL

- 36,000-year-old cave paintings

- Shape cultures, beliefs, lives

- Self-discovery and healing

- Create empathy and connection

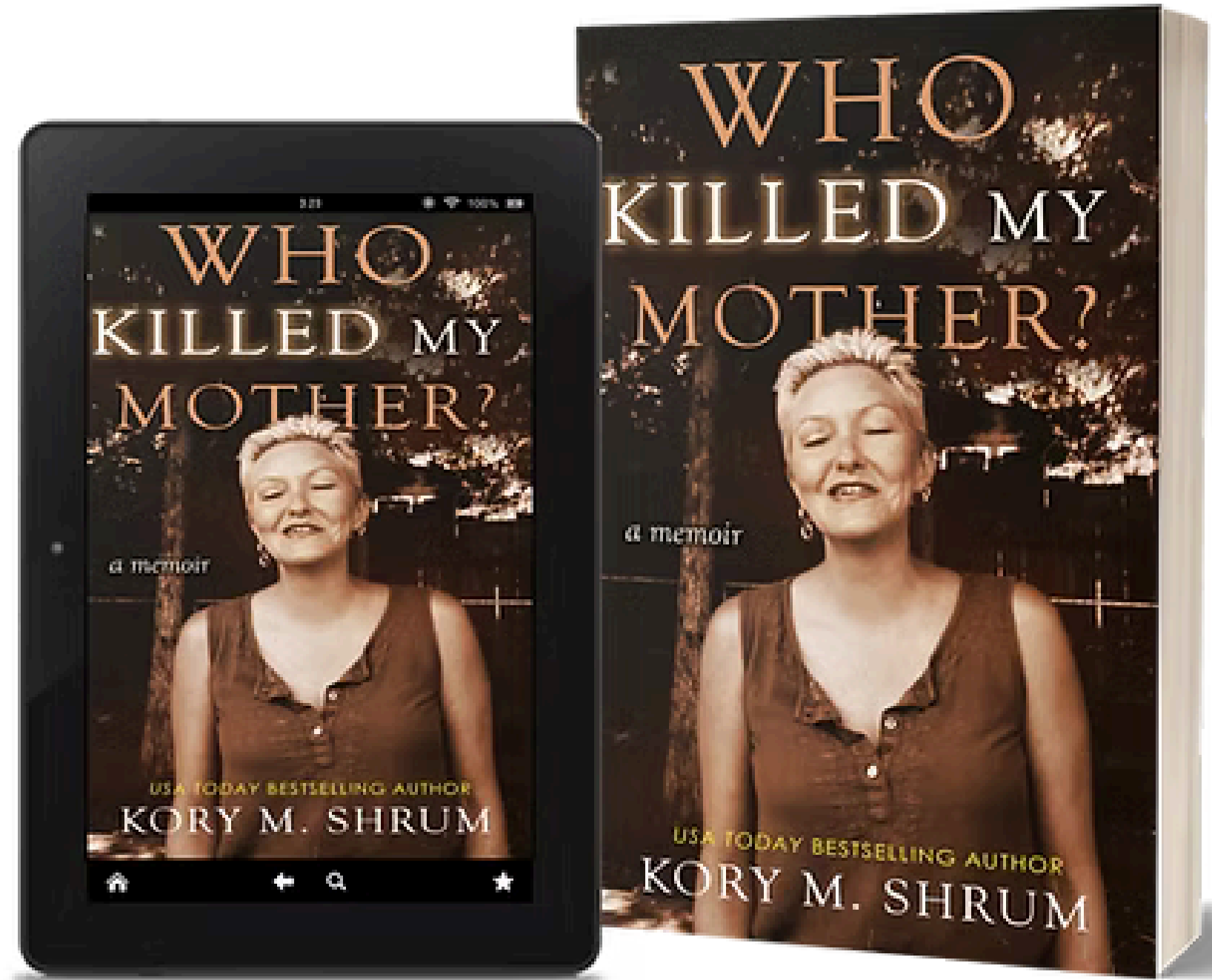- Inspire action and change

MYTH

"I am not creative."

TRUTH

To be human is to be creative.

Creativity Definition

Creativity is the ability to make something new by combining ideas, experiences, or materials in a meaningful way.

Creativity + AI

Story Elements

- Character

- Conflict

- Audience & Purpose

- Genre

- Language & Voice

- Hook

- Clarity

Character

Character

- **Desire** (what they want)
- **Fear** (what they fear)
- **Relatable** / Likable (emotional resonance)
- **Specifics** (unique traits, habits)
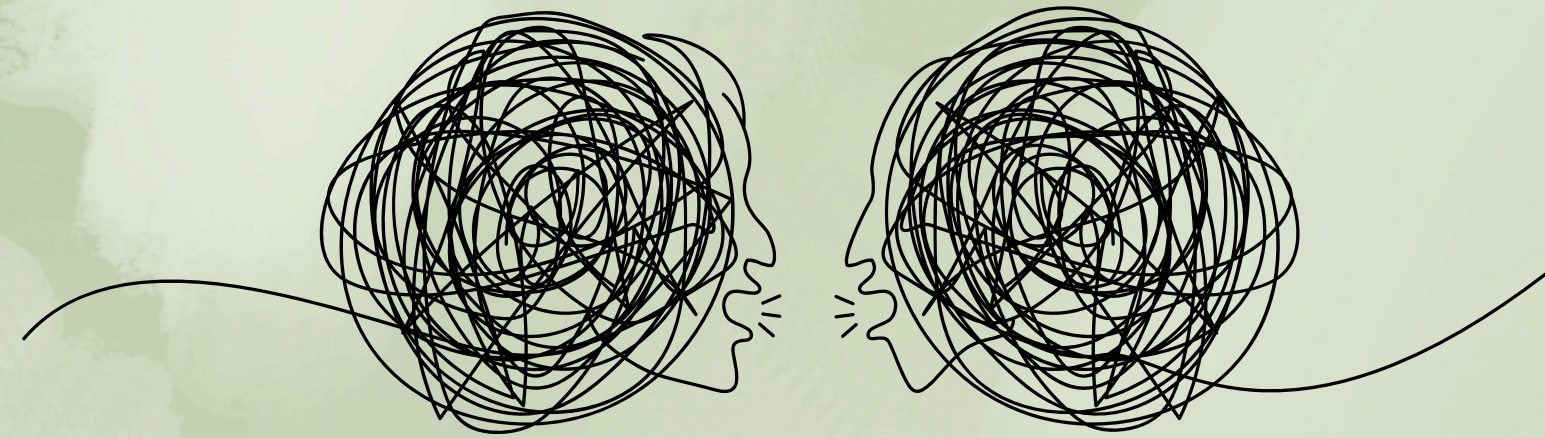- **Description** (sensory experience)

Exercise 1

1. Choose someone you like. Real or imaginary.
2. Describe them (clothes, hair, voice). **SPECIFICS**.
3. What is this person's greatest desire?
4. What is this person's greatest fear?
5. Why are they likable or relatable?
6. What's a unique habit they have?
7. Now put them in a scene or memory (if real).

Conflict

Conflict

- **Internal**: "I want/fear this but…"
- **External**: "Why is this happening? What will I do?"
- **Personal Stakes**: "This has to happen or…"
- **Public Stakes**: "This is also my problem because…"

Character and conflict *make* the story.

Exercise 2

Hero OR villain

Take your character (or someone new.) Write a paragraph first as a hero. Write it again as villain.

Purpose

Purpose

- Purpose gives direction.

- It anchors all choices.

- It motivates.

Suicide prevention campaign

Watch the video

Purpose

- What am I trying to achieve with this story?

- What action do I want the reader/viewer to take?

- What message must come across clearly?

- What emotions or reactions do I want to evoke?

- What format should I use?

- Who do I need to tell this story to?

Audience

Who Are You Talking To?

- Who needs to hear this?
- What are their values, needs, and concerns? What matters most to them?
- How do they feel about the topic? Support, resistance, curiosity? Meet them there.
- Where will they encounter this message? Match tone and format to the setting (e.g., email, speech, social media).
- Language matters (mermaids vs. video games)
- Decide what needs to be included.

Exercise 3

Explain (or defend) something you love to 1-2 audiences. Ideas:

- Two different family members (who don't get it).
- A 4-year-old vs. a 16-year-old
- An alien visiting Earth for the first time
- A skeptical mayor with control of your funding
- A TikTok audience with a 7-second attention span
- A group of retired park rangers who love birds
- Your future self, 20 years from now
- A billionaire who only invests in "sexy" projects
- A Victorian seamstress vs. a knight in chainmail
- Your ex versus your current partner

Genre

Genre

- Grant writing
- Advocacy and policy communication
- Public outreach and education
- Social media campaigns

Grant Writing

- **Narrative Framing:** Use storytelling to humanize the data.

- **Metaphors or vivid language:** Sparingly used to make the problem or solution easier to visualize.

- **Formatting creativity:** Use bullet points, bolding, headers for readability.

Advocacy / Policy

- **Compelling story:** Usually one short, vivid anecdote that tugs the heart.

- **Bold framing:** Open with a striking stat, headline, or quote.

- **Clear "ask" section:** Creative use of callout boxes or bold text to make the request stand out.

"I'm Fine..."

ARE YOU REALLY?

Go deeper

BENEATH THE SURFACE

"I wish as a freshman I had known everyone struggles to find inclusion at large universities, and sometimes students from minority backgrounds especially feel the struggle." – Katelyn Fletcher

Services and support are available to help Cornell students address a range of issues impacting health and well-being.

Cornell Health
medical and mental health services
phone consultation 24/7
607 255-5155
health.cornell.edu

Center for Intercultural Dialogue
626 Thurston Ave.
brings together diverse student organizations, and other cultural centers across campus
living.sas.cornell.edu (search "intercultural")

Beneath The Surface   Additional resources: caringcommunity.cornell.edu

This campaign was developed by Cornell students... for Cornell students.

"I'm Fine..."

ARE YOU REALLY?

Go deeper

BENEATH THE SURFACE

"I began to struggle with mental illness a couple years ago. Half a year passed before I let my family or close friends know of my health; I was scared of the shame, the labels, and the stigma — the very issues I worked to improve at Cornell" – Teresa Danso-Danquah

Services and support are available to help Cornell students address a range of issues impacting health and well-being.

Cornell Health Counseling & Psychological Services
professional counseling & support
607 255-5155
health.cornell.edu/CAPS

ILR Office of Student Services
101 Ives Hall
services and support for undergraduates in the ILR School
ilr.cornell.edu/student/office-student-services

Beneath The Surface   Additional resources: caringcommunity.cornell.edu

This campaign was developed by Cornell students... for Cornell students.

Public Outreach & Education

- **Design & layout:** Visual hierarchy, clean formatting, consistent style.

- **Images or illustrations:** To break up text and reinforce key ideas.

- **Creative headlines/hooks:** Questions, humor, emotional pulls, or bold truths.

- **Social media–friendly language:** Conversational tone, scannable text.

Watch BBC video

"Inside the horrors of human trafficking."

This is the story of Maria, a single-mother trafficked from Nicaraugua to Mexico. All the events are based on her interviews.

The Hook

You have 3 seconds.
Make them count.

"It was dark inside the wolf."
- Margaret Atwood

- Start with a moment of tension or surprise.

- Ask a bold question or use a striking stat/fact.

- Paint a vivid picture.

- Begin with a confession. (Personal + vulnerable = instant connection)

- Drop them in the middle. ("in media res")

Humanizing the Data

My Mom as Data

- <u>20.4 million</u> American adults suffered from both a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder, in the past year.
- <u>In 2022</u>, an estimated 11.6% (28.8 million) of U.S. adults currently smoked cigarettes.
- 63.9% of U.S. adults <u>reported</u> at least one ACE; 17.3% reported four or more ACEs.

Humanizing the Data

- Start with the person (character)

- Evoke emotion (conflict)

- Use simple, concrete (audience-appropriate) language

- Tell a story with a beginning (Person), middle (Conflict) and end (Resolution, CTA, Transformation)

- Use data as a supporting actor, not the star

Exercise 4

Write a person you care about. Make me care.

- Character (desire, fear, description, uniqueness)
- Conflict (internal, external, personal stakes, public stakes)
- Purpose (Why should I care?)
- Language, Tone & Emotion: Inspirational, hopeful, etc?
- Hook
- Story arc structure: beginning middle, end
- Sensory detail: See, feel, hear, taste, smell?

Storytelling & Impact Narratives

- **Story arc structure:** Character > Conflict > Transformation

- **Sensory detail:** What did the person see, feel, hear?

- **Tone & emotion:** Inspirational, hopeful, authentic.

- **Creative format:** Can be written, spoken, visual.

Putting it all together

1. Start with your character.
2. Illustrate conflict(s).
3. Clarify purpose.
4. Know your audience.
5. Refine with genre.
6. Nail the hook.
7. Be specific. A person not data.

Download a free copy of *Who Killed My Mother?*
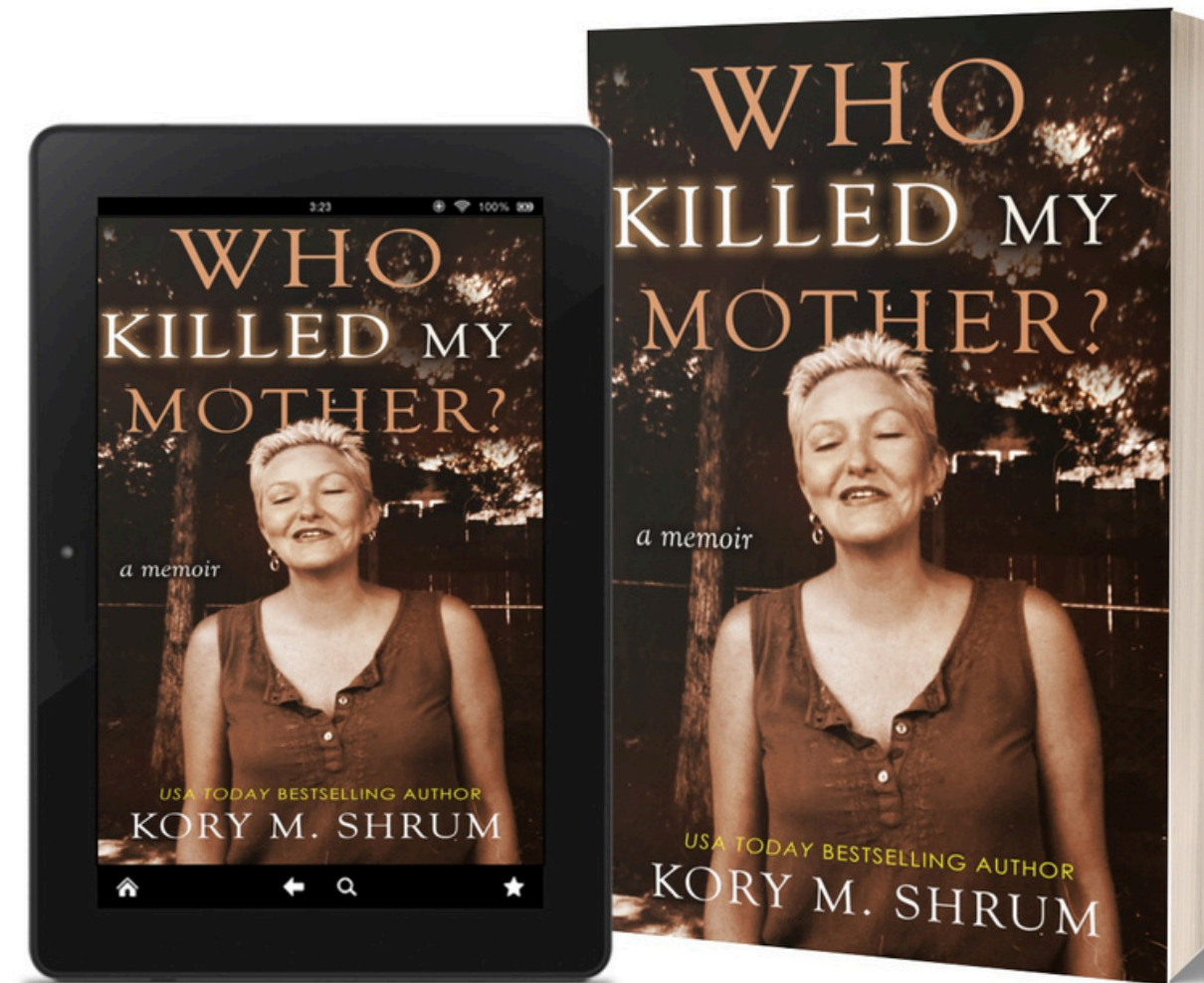
OR email kory@korymshrum.com

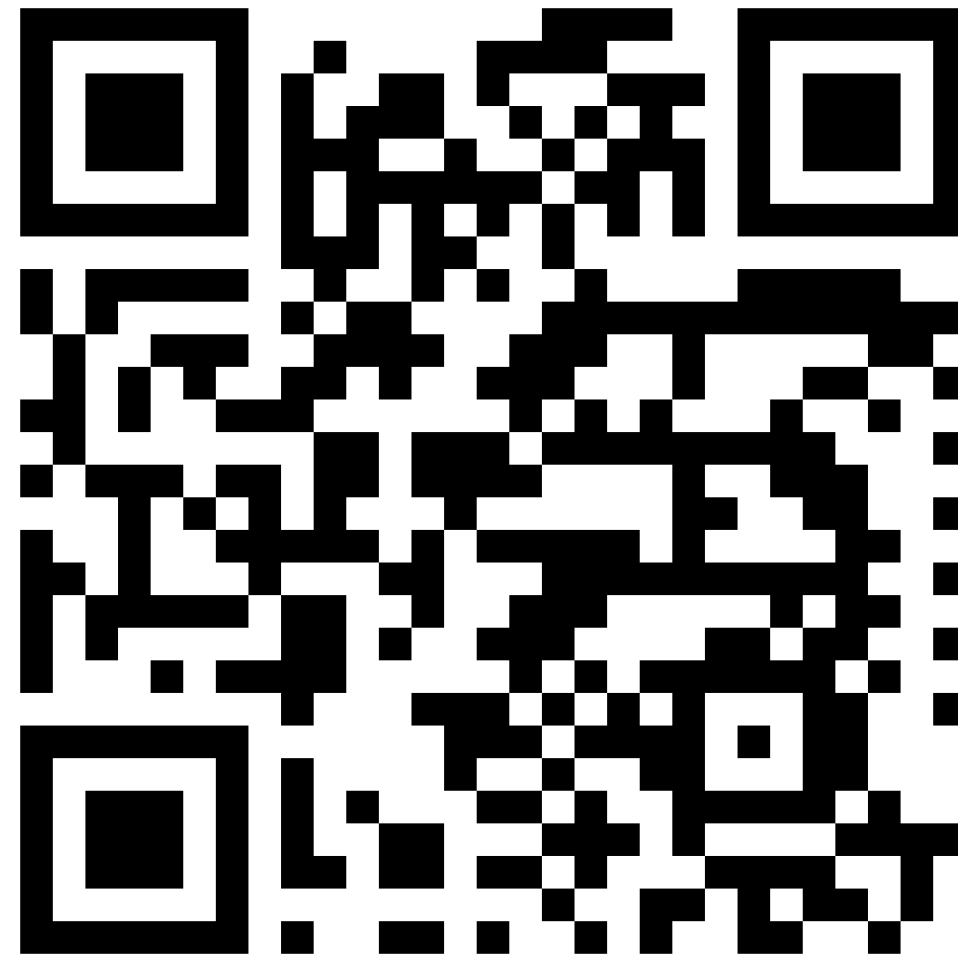# Check Your Intention

Bonus Round:
The Worst Kind of Story

The *worst* kind of story is the untrue story you tell yourself.

Exercise 5

1. What is a story that someone (or the world) made you believe about yourself that wasn't true?

2. Why did you believe it?

3. What would it take for you to stop believing it?

4. Rewrite it now (as if you don't believe it.)

Don't forget your worksheet packet!

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