30 prompts for one novel

Cards 1 to 10 / Start with any card

01. Make your protagonist ask for help from the person they insulted last chapter.

02. Let the answer arrive as a condition they cannot explain to their closest friend.

03. Bring back a minor witness. Give them one detail the protagonist remembered wrong.

04. Have two allies agree on a destination but disagree on who gets left behind.

05. Put the most useful object in the hands of someone who wants an apology.

06. Write a promise that means something different to each person in the room.

07. Show the cost of keeping that promise before anyone discusses it.

08. Return to a familiar place. Remove the sound your character relies on to feel safe.

09. Let the wrong person take credit for the protagonist's smallest victory.

10. Give the antagonist one chance to tell the truth. Make it expensive.

30 prompts for one novel

Cards 11 to 20 / Start with any card

11. Repeat an early scene from the doorway, through the eyes of the person waiting outside.

12. A message arrives a chapter late. Write the decision that can still be changed.

13. Let an ally notice a contradiction and choose whom to tell first.

14. Replace a confrontation with a meal where one seat stays empty.

15. Break the tool that solved the last problem. Who still knows the old method?

16. Give the quietest character a veto and let them use it.

17. Bring back a rumor. This time the protagonist knows exactly who started it.

18. Make two necessary appointments happen at the same hour in different places.

19. Let a borrowed name open a door and close another.

20. Write the moment someone returns a keepsake to the wrong owner.

30 prompts for one novel

Cards 21 to 30 / Start with any card

21. Give an enemy a practical reason to protect the protagonist for one evening.

22. Show a place after the characters have left. Who cleans up what they did?

23. Make a trusted account of the past impossible on one specific date.

24. Let the protagonist choose what to admit before the evidence appears.

25. Return an early gift with a new use that neither giver nor recipient anticipated.

26. Make the shortest route home pass the person your protagonist betrayed.

27. Give a witness a chance to correct the record at a personal cost.

28. Stage a second attempt at an early failure. Change only who is watching.

29. Pay off a small promise in a way that complicates the larger victory.

30. End with an ordinary task from chapter one. Show what the character now does differently.

30 prompts for one novel

Three ways to use a card

Card 1: Mara needs the ferryman she called a thief to take her brother across the river. End when he names his price.

Card 12: Yesterday the letter would have stopped the wedding. Today it can still change who inherits the boat.

Card 30: In chapter one Mara counted the fare twice. At the end she gives a stranger a seat before counting the coins.