My first experience of competing in a short story contest will stay with me for as long as I live. I was a senior in high school and there was buzz of a creative writing competition that would also include students from other schools in our town. I have never been brazenly social in my life but discussions on books and narratives have always been my strong suit. It was only natural that friends and peers insisted I participate. The reluctance I felt at first and eventually overcoming my self-doubt taught me several valuable lessons.

It was soon revealed that the school management was offering a cash prize for the winner. Within hours, requests from my friends about entering the competition had turned into unabashed demands. I was adamant but there was obviously a catch here. I loved to write and the only thing stopping me was that I could not afford making a fool of myself months before graduating. This continued until the last day for registering was here. Second guessing it every minute, I secretly entered and waited for them to reveal the prompt. It was a Jane Austen quote and I was over the moon. Before I knew what was happening, words were flowing, and my battered copy of Pride and Prejudice had made its way back onto my desk. Only a couple coffee mugs later, I had already experienced an earth-shattering writing high. The story was ready for submission. Feeling a notch more confident than earlier, I sent it in.

Judgement day came a week later, and my heart could not have beaten faster. None of my friends or teachers knew I had participated. I waited with cautious hope. They announced my name and I felt myself floating to the stage to receive my prize. They were saying something about my story being an example of good writing. By taking a simple personal decision to chose hope over self-doubt, I had changed my perspective over my writing forever. It will continue to be a source of motivation pressing me to write years from now. With a dream that life will bring positive reinforcements of that feeling, hope continues to shine over me and my writing.