



How to Write a Novel and Screenplay

By

Tom Richards

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About *How to Write a Novel and Screenplay*

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In this 'How to Guide' to writing Your Novel and / or Screenplay, we look at the process most writers go through: from writing your Premise / Logline, to Character Breakdowns & Descriptions, through Chapter Breakdowns / Step Outlines, Character Descriptions and what makes them 'tick', using REAL people to develop your characters and stories, your Synopsis (and something on Step Outlines), 3-Act Hollywood Screenplays (and Novels) and Finally How to Write your Novel and Screenplay.

This Small Guide is FREE for many months to come! Feel free to share it, though it's copyrighted by this writer and his Company, Storylines Entertainment Ltd. Forward it to others who share the same passion for writing that you do! Why not? It's ENTIRELY FREE!

As I tell other people who want to write a First Novel and / or Screenplay, the secret to writing is to put your BUTT in a chair and either make notes with a pen, pencil and piece of paper, or sit behind your computer and WRITE at least 20 minutes to an hour every day you can. If you're working full-time, that's fine too! Keep a pad of paper and a pen right next to you at work and jot down some ideas of what you want to write every day you're on the job.

Remember, writing (and storytelling) started in Ancient Times here on Earth. Archaeologists have discovered many 'paintings' made thousands of years ago. These told stories of that Ancient Tribe of Human Beings who speared reindeer, Mastadons and other large mammals with Sharp Arrow points of Flint tied to long sticks. Lit by an open fire in the cave that kept them warm and protected, these Storytellers made the first Cinema and Theatre as they made their many tales of hunting come alive again.

That's exactly what you're trying to do! Write fiction (or other books such as Memoirs and biographies) based on REAL EVENTS in your life.

Writing is always hard work. But that's okay! Hard work is part of your every day life. So after you read this Small Guide, sit down and work hard on your first or next story.

Good luck! And yes, even the Gods themselves (as well as writers, actors, singers, producers, agents and publishers) need a lot of luck to become well-known writers.

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CHAPTER 1 – THE PREMISE

The Premise of your Novel (if a Screenplay it's called a **LOGLINE**) is **THE MOST IMPORTANT FIRST STEP** you'll ever take. A Premise is usually 2 or 3 short paragraphs: the beginning of your story, the middle and the end. Those few paragraphs include **EVERYTHING** you need to move on to the next steps, your character backstories and Chapter Breakdown (called a **STEP OUTLINE** for Screenplays).

So what does a reasonably good Premise look like?

IMPORTANT NOTE: ask yourself a few questions as you start writing this:

- What are the emotions of each 'important' character in the story? At each beat in each chapter that you will write, are they happy? Sad? Horrified? Frightened? Overjoyed? Laughing with tears in their eyes? Crying all the time because they've lost that one person who is their soulmate and spouse or partner?
- What novels or films have you read/watched that are somewhat similar to your story and

the characters in your story? If a loving Adventure tale, there are so many good stories out there to read and watch. If an action story with a bold, courageous leader, I think of “Captain’s Courageous” or “Master and Commander”. If a Science Fiction story, I can only think of Arthur C. Clarke and 2001 or any of his many novels and the films that he helped to write. Or how about a story with a Strong Woman as the central character? Ms Allende, who was responsible for creating the genre “Magical Realism” was and is a VERY strong woman. Mexican, she was heavily influenced by Magical Realism in Mexican Art. Strong Women has become a very special Genre in novels and films. For instance, how about “Chocolat”? An amazingly Romantic Adventure story based in a fictional town somewhere in Contemporary France.

If you’re thinking of history, and focusing on English History as your story, be SURE to watch, “The King’s Speech” and “Titanic”. I use these two fantastic films to

teach students the basics of good storytelling.

So let's look at a Premise that I've written recently and we'll go from there.

AN EXAMPLE OF A PREMISE by Tom Richards

DOLPHIN SONG BY TOM RICHARDS – AN EXAMPLE OF A STRONG PREMISE AND LOGLINE

My novel *Dolphin Song* went to #1 Globally. This was due to the fact that, while I'd written it primarily for women, as many men purchased this novel as women.

(Cross-genre: psychological drama / romance / magical realism Word Count: 115,350)

"Is it possible to love someone so completely they never die?"

Premise: Overwhelmed by the death at sea of her Irish husband, and with only-son Jason traumatized and mute, Bostonian Dawn McCarthy is forced to reconnect with life's mysteries. Returning to Ireland, she realizes that a wild dolphin holds a mystifying key to healing. At last finding trust, Dawn takes a miraculous leap of faith which heals her son, and discovers that love truly is forever.

NOW LOOK AT THE SYNOPSIS WHICH IS BASED ON THE ABOVE PREMISE:

Synopsis: Tragedy strikes Dawn McCarthy when Michael, her Irish husband and soul-mate, drowns in a boating accident off the coast of Ireland. Son Jason, five, who witnessed his father's death, is unable to speak or connect emotionally with anyone. Desperate to help him, Dawn brings Jason back to America. In Boston, the boy is diagnosed with traumatic mutism, a dissociative disorder. Following a series of failed therapies, Dawn believes Jason will never speak again.

Rejecting the doctor's advice, as well as the anti-psychotic drug her son is prescribed, Dawn quits her job, removes Jason from hospital, and leaves Boston for the remote Irish fishing village where her husband had lived and died. There, within the warmth of loving memories, she hopes to find a cure for her son. But it is not an easy return for Dawn. As an outsider, she faces daily reminders of Michael and what might have been. Her widowed mother-in-law, Margaret, welcomes Dawn and Jason into her home and does her best to comfort them, while dealing with her own grief over the loss of her only child.

At a solitary cove Michael had shared with them in happier times, the appearance of a wild dolphin brings newfound hope to Dawn. In the days that follow, she witnesses a

powerful bond grow between Jason and the dolphin as the boy takes his first small steps toward reconnecting with life.

But not everyone shares Dawn's joy. Jackie O'Sullivan, a fisherman who had been Michael's friend, warns her against drawing the dolphin into local waters where any competition for fish would be unwelcome because the town depend on fishing for survival. When Dawn ignores Jackie's threats, violence leads to another tragic loss of life and shatters her best hope for Jason's recovery.

Yet *Dolphin Song* is a tale of legends, love, and magic, and when Dawn again hears the dolphin's song echoing across the harbor, she at last realizes that Michael has undergone a miraculous rebirth and transformation. She and Jason take a leap of faith that reunites the family, leading Dawn to understand that death is not an end, but a voyage begun.

- **SHORT AND TO THE POINT:** See how both the Premise and the Synopsis are very, very short? Both become your 'road map'. They help you keep focused on the characters, they're backstories, the world and the conflict as you move forward with the NEXT step of writing your novel.

But what about a **LOGLINE**? A logline, in film, is your Elevator Pitch to a potential producer or Film Agent. It can also be used to pitch a Publisher or Literary Agent. Here's the Logline for the Feature Film "Dolphin Song".

LOGLINE FOR THE FEATURE FILM DOLPHIN SONG BY TOM RICHARDS

Logline: overwhelmed by the horrifying death of her husband and soulmate, a bitter young American is forced to reconnect with life's mysteries. Finally learning that love truly is forever, she is at last able to heal her traumatized son – and herself.

A Logline is **SUPPOSED** to be 25 words or less. The above Logline is as close as I could get and I literally **PRINTED THIS OUT** (I wrote this any number of times until I really thought it worked for the film) and taped it to the Wall above my Laptop Computer.

BUT WHAT'S AN ELEVATOR PITCH?

Let's say you're in LA or New York City or Chicago. You're going out to dinner with a friend and to get to the Top of the tall building you need to take an elevator. When you climb into a car, you see a Woman (or a Man) dressed in clothes much more expensive that you're wearing. He or she is talking to their companion (you realize that they're an employee and that the other person is a Film Producer). Engaging them in a very brief conversation, you tell them that you've just finished writing a Screenplay for Feature film.

"Really?" one of them asks. "What's it about? You have exactly 30 seconds."

"About?" you'll reply, now very nervous. "It's a very unique story and I don't think I've ever seen anything in the Cinema that's quite like it."

The doors close and now you know you have only 30 seconds before they open again. Other than the 2 people from the Film Production Company, you're the only one in that little

car. “Before I forget, here’s my business card,” you’ll continue, handing them each your business card (SPECIAL NOTE: YES, YOU NEED BUSINESS CARDS! THEY’RE CHEAP! ON THEM ALL HAVE PRINTED YOUR NAME IN BOLD, YOUR PHONE NUMBER AND YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS!!! WHO KNOWS? A FILM PRODUCER, PUBLISHER OR AGENT COULD CONTACT YOU!)

“Now, you ask what my screenplay is about. The title is Dolphin Song.”

“Dolphin Song?” one of them asks. “That’s really interesting. Go on!”

The elevator keeps going up as you take a huge breath. You’ve memorized the logline and all you do is repeat what you’ve practiced over and over again. Finished, you shake their hands as the Elevator doors open again.

“Do you mind if I take your cards, too?” you finally ask. They each give you their Business Cards and you KEEP THEM IN A VERY SAFE PLACE.

That’s what a Logline is for – it starts a conversation that should be very effective, very short and very, very memorable.

LOST LOVERS...OR HOW MY FIANCEE LOST ME 3 TIMES ON MY CRAZY, HORRIBLE JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD by Tom Richards

(Unfortunately, this first-time Producer made a HUGE, EXPENSIVE MISTAKE)

Now let’s look at another example, this time focusing only on the above Hysterically Funny screenplay for Feature Film. Rather than show another Logline let’s look at this:

Detailed Synopsis Lost Lovers by Tom Richards

Grace Upendo a Swahili African, is only 6 when we meet her. We see immediately that she’s considered a saint by the local villagers because she feeds all the various animals in what she calls her Personal Zoo on a nearby Savannah. She can also seem to ‘talk’ to the animals because before she feeds them she asks them to kneel in prayer and they do! At that early point in her life, Grace sure isn’t what to do: she knows she will never be satisfied living in a small West African village but her mother, Luna, knows that someday, Grace will receive a calling from God to help poor people across the world. In Detroit Michigan, we meet Sean Hope. Sean is also only 6 (though he’s 8 years older than Grace, so the timeline at that point is earlier. Like Grace, we immediately see that Sean has a true calling because on Christmas Eve he help a local Soup Kitchen to feed the poor rather than go to sleep to wait for Saint Nick. Sean’s actions, despite still being a child, come to the local Archbishop’s attention. Sending for Sean, he asks that very young man if someday, he’d like to be a priest. Sean agrees to think about it but is excited by such a prospect. Later, Sean is 18 and works as a Catholic missionary in the State of Michigan, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Cuba and many other places around the world. Convinced that he has been called to be a priest, Sean agrees to go to Notre Dame University to study Theology. However, when a lecturer talks to him, asking him to take his time about such a huge decision as priesthood, Sean decides to postpone taking his vows. Instead, the Sociology lecturer, also a close friend of Sean’s, suggests he go to West Africa to help the poor and learn a few things about life. Sean immediately agrees with that important advice. In West African, and fresh off a flight from America, Sean is attracted to a tourist booth. On it, he reads about the Swahili and their cultures. Reading that many Swahili are Catholic, and wanting to teach in such a village or otherwise serve a local Catholic Priest, Sean climbs on a bus and is let off at the first Swahili village the bus comes to. There, Sean first meets Grace. She is teaching Sunday School (and is also

the village teacher of English). As she teaches a group of children how to memorise important prayers necessary for their First Holy Communion, Sean is mesmerised by what he sees. Grace, now 16, is truly beautiful and so very smart! Not having any place to sleep that night, and hungry because he hasn't had anything to eat, Grace asks Luna if Sean can eat with them and sleep in their nearby stable with the farm animals. Luna agrees. Later, with both Sean and Grace unable to sleep, they find each other outside beneath the starry sky and moonlight and kiss the first time. For both of them it's love at first sight. But Sean also realizes that Grace, at 16, has too much still to learn about life. Now 22, Sean realizes that he must go back to the States to complete his education and knows that Grace won't ever come with him because she decides to go to India to learn more about her own vocation in life. However, he buys a Diamond Engagement ring with the almost the last of his cash and proposes to her. Grace takes the diamond in its big ring box and throws it high into the air. When it hits the ground it is immediately buried in the sand. Much later, Luna finds it and sends it back to Sean in America. In India, Grace travels immediately to Calcutta, there to join the Abbey of Sr Theresa and become a novitiate. However, when she feeds the poor in the crowded city, she is beaten and then raped as other novitiates are. Ashamed of herself for some reason, and despite Sr Theresa's prayers, Grace becomes a whore in order to keep feeding the poor of India. She reasons that being a whore is appropriate for one who has been raped. Then, to dim her pain, she becomes hooked on Cocaine. Sean learns that Grace is in trouble from Luna. Travelling to Calcutta, he finds Grace ready to kill herself. But he pleads with her not to do so because it's a sin against God. Grace realizes that she is about to commit a great sin and lets Sean minister to her. He heals her completely but, when he asks her to marry him, she again refuses for reasons he does not understand. Grace works on a freighter to get to Australia where she hopes to find a job and heal enough to be worthy of Sean's love. Sean, distraught, must go back to the United States. In Brisbane Australia, and meeting Kylie Whipple (80s) who becomes her best friend, Grace also gets a job as a first mate aboard a yacht owned by Jester Jones. All Jester wants from her is sex. Grace again feels that she is selling her body to survive but keeps the job to pay for her flat and other small bills. When tourists board the yacht and it sets sail, Grace uses her innate skills and strength of character to save Jester, herself, the two foreign tourists and the yacht. Back in Brisbane, Kylie convinces Grace that Jester is only a tyrant and to leave his employment before he hurts her again. Deciding to do just that, Grace wants her revenge first. Stealing his yacht, she is determined to sink it. But then, a vicious gale comes up. It blows the yacht west, finally foundering on a mysterious island that isn't on any nautical chart. On the island, Grace notices strange eyes staring at her from a dense jungle. Fleeing from honey bees who suddenly attack her, Grace is caught in the web of a huge Spider. She is freed when the other animals convince this 8-legged creature to let her go. But Grace is so frightened she wants to go home. But with no way off the island because the yacht foundered, Grace knows she must sleep at least a few nights on a beach. There, just as she's going to sleep, Grace meets three animals who seem almost human. Bottom, Mo and Beth. They convince her to stay because they want to put on a play which will be staged just for her! After all, says Beth, we've never had a human being come to our island before! Beth agrees, but because she only understands these three Mechanicals who are also actors as well as skilled back stage crew members, Grace agrees to go to Fish School. Taken there by a Dolphin, and astride its back, Grace plunges beneath the sea. At Fish School, she meets many other animals that want to learn to talk in English and like the fish so they can understand anyone and any animal they meet. When Fish School starts, Grace meets the teacher. This school Marm looks and acts just like Robin Williams. She also meets a swordfish who looks and talks just like Dustin Hoffman in Hook! When these two fight, Grace learns that the Swordfish is all a fake. As in real life, some things aren't as harmful as they seem to be. Having finished her time in Fish School, and now understanding the animals and all the fishes she'll ever meet, Grace ventures back to the mysterious island just in time for the 1-Act play which is a short version of *Midsummer Night's Dream*. She also meets a 2-headed Kangaroo, who is the central announcer as the Stage Play starts. That 2 Headed 'Roo sounds and acts just like Sean Hope! With Grace in the audience, the stage play begins and all of the animals she has met star in it, including

the Kangaroo who she guesses is Sean in disguise. As the curtain comes down, and realizing that it really is Sean, Grace faints. When Sean lifts her up, the two kiss again after many, many years. Sean wants to ask her to marry him again, but first he must find a diamond ring. The entire cast and audience search the island for the ring, but no one can find it. Then Grace stumbles into a hole dug into the sand and covered by detritus from the last hurricane to hit the island. She pulls up a box and opens it. Inside is a letter that Sean wrote to her many years ago when she was only 16. It speaks of his undying love for her and promises that wherever she may roam, he'll follow her. Underneath the letter is the diamond ring he tried to give her many years ago when she was only 16. She turns around and finds Sean standing there. He takes the ring, gets down on his knees, and proposes to her. This time, Grace immediately accepts. They voyage across the sea on the ocean liner the Queen Elizabeth II. In New York City, they are given a grand wedding reception. Grace, now pregnant with their first child, watches as fireworks pierce the skyline in great balls of light. Then, as the Marine Band Plays the Star-Spangled Banner, Grace tells Sean that wherever he may go, she'll always be at his side. And as they kiss again, Kylie Whipple reminds all of us: keep praying for help and like Saint Teresa of Calcutta and Saint Brigid of Ireland, we can't pray for ourselves but each other. All we have to do to help each other is practice the Golden Rule – which is exactly what Sean and Grace have done for each other. They helped each other with all of their hearts. Isn't that what you'd do for those you love?

This synopsis changed GREATLY as I continued writing the New Screenplay. It DID finally become my roadmap for this, the first 'Comedy for Feature Film) that I've ever written. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MISTAKE I MADE THAT WAS SO EXPENSIVE it almost sunk our company, Storylines Entertainment Ltd? (Hereafter, SEL, which is soon to become Storylines Entertainment Incorporated, or SEI).

Here's what happened. I wrote a COMPLETE SCREENPLAY and had Act One Produced by an Indian Animation Production Company. That first screenplay was based on the Novel by Tom Richards which, to be frank, sold very few copies. I'd rushed the book for no good reason, thinking that the market for faith-based books was Huge! What I didn't realise was that, as an Illustrated Book for Families, the market was very, very small and fragmented. My research on the novel was incomplete. The size of the book was wrong (it was printed as a European sized A4 hardback and paperback). Even though my company tried to market the novel Globally, nothing worked to increase sales!

But what's more – I asked that Indian company to ANIMATE ALL OF ACT ONE. And when they sent it to me to lock it down and pass it on to Global Film Producers / Distributors, I realized that Act One wouldn't work at all! So...I did what any good producer would do. I licked my wounds and wrote the entire thing off! (I won't tell you how much cash SEL spent on that very poor Act One of Lost Lovers. Take \$50 and add any number of Zeros! Fortunately, we'd sold many, many, many, many copies of Dolphin Song the Novel so the company SEL was still solvent and continues to be otherwise I couldn't write this!)

Writers, producers, agents, talent scouts and publishers all make mistakes. The IMPORTANT THING IS TO LEARN BY EACH OF THEM AND NEVER, EVER DO THE SAME THING AGAIN! And I've promised myself and my company that I won't!

But back to Lost Lovers, the new Feature Film.

Okay, you've written a Feature Film Logline and a Synopsis. That's followed by a 3 to 8 Page Treatment (at least usually it is. I didn't do one because I was not applying for a Grant of any kind or even a loan. In those events, you MUST write a very, very long 'TREATMENT'. (See Appendix for an Example).

So what NEXT? No, you're not yet ready to write your Novel or Screenplay. The next step is a Character Breakdown and their backstories:

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Descriptions) and Backstories

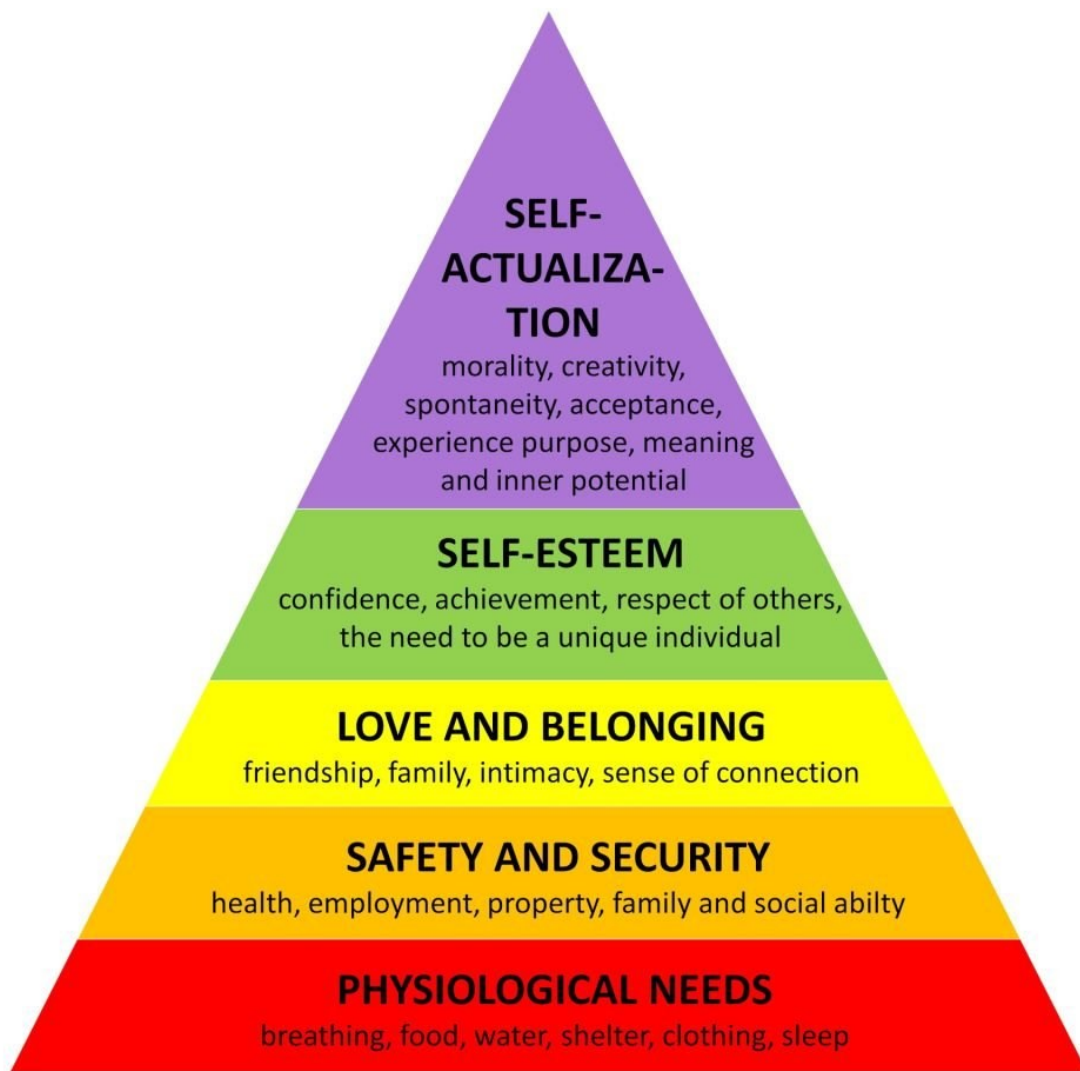
What is the above? What? If you say to yourself as you read this, "Come on, Tom! Let's start REALLY WRITING!" well, you're doing yourself an injustice. Character Breakdowns and Descriptions are a very necessary part of your Foundation and Preparation to really start writing.

WHERE DO YOUR CHARACTERS COME FROM?

This is one of the most frequent questions I'm asked by those who want to write creatively. My answer? USE PEOPLE YOU KNOW AS WELL AS YOURSELF. Why? You're familiar with them. You know them. You know what they look like. You know the flaws in their characters. What makes them tick. They're likes and dislikes. What they want out of life. What they dream of.

In creative writing it's called Wants versus Needs. For instance, you WANT to own a real 75-foot Yacht. The problem? It's way too expensive! So you dream about it. For now, you'll be content with a MODEL of a Yacht that sits on a shelf above your computer. Needs are important to all of us. In Philosophy, it's called Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and it looks like this:

MASLOW'S HEIRARCHY OF NEEDS



Do take a close look at the Pyramid. In there, you can find EVERYTHING that humans really need to survive and be at least somewhat happy. We all need to eat and drink. We all need to be clothed and warm (or cool depending on the weather and where you live). We all have the basic human right to be safe. We all need to be housed. We all need to be loved and nurtured. If we don't receive these Basic Needs, well, life isn't very happy, is it? And sometimes, without those Needs being met, life can be placed under extreme threat.

Characters in creative stories are 'bound' by these same needs. In any type of story, and here think of TRUMAN, the feature film with Jim Carrey starring, his Basic Needs weren't being met! The main character had fallen in love with a real woman. But an actress who claimed to be his wife as well as his family (and the Unseen Director of the TV Reality Show) REFUSED to let him see her or know who he really was! The result? That character played by Jim eventually takes a sailboat out and, risking his life, finally finds his freedom and the love of his life.

These basic needs in the Character are supplemented by his Wants: the want to sail on the 'sea' despite the fact that he is afraid of water (being afraid is a great character flaw causing all kinds of internal and external conflict. Being AFRAID of anything: snakes, flying, food, people, insects –

adds MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS AND ARE SOURCES OF EXTREME CONFLICT for almost any character. Therefore, NEEDS and WANTS are very much a part of your Character Descriptions and Backstories.

LOST LOVERS CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS, ARCS AND BACKSTORIES

Grace Upendo (ages in the screenplay, from 6 to early 30s) is a Swahili African. Encountering her first love at only 16 years of age, she does not have the confidence to accept that young man's proposal. Fleeing to India to work with a local Abbey, she is raped. With all confidence lost, she journeys to Australia where she is again raped by a local yacht owner. With her confidence in herself in tatters, Grace finally works up the courage to leave that yacht owner, who was her employer, but not before she finds that she has the skill to rescue her boss, their two foreign guests, as well as the yacht. Stealing the skipper's boat to get away from that madman, she ventures to an unknown island. There she gets her confidence back by learning to live with the local animals. She also encounters a 2 headed Kangaroo and finally realizing that it's the love of her life come to find her again, she agrees to marry him. At the end of the story, Grace watches and understands Sean and the other animals as they stage a performance of a 1 Act play based on Romeo & Juliet. To do all this, to go from a hurt, unconfident young woman, to a confident, loyal, and strong mature adult, Grace learns that she not only needs to take a leap of faith in the Almighty God, but must learn to believe in herself and her new husband, Sean Hope.

Sean Hope (ages in the screenplay, from age 6 to early 30s) is an American living near Detroit Michigan when we first see him. Deciding to become a priest and a missionary, but not confident at all in his vocation, he ventures to West Africa. There, he encounters Grace, from Jua, a Swahili Village. Sean works up the confidence to kiss her because it's love at first sight for the two of them. But though he wants to marry her, he realizes that she's far too young for him. Going back to the States, he learns from Grace's mother that her daughter is in trouble in Calcutta India. Sean flies to India to rescue Grace. Seeing how physically injured she is, and how she has lost confidence in herself, he does everything he can to heal her. But Grace still isn't ready to get married. Sean loses faith in himself and his God when Grace leaves him to find work in Brisbane Australia. But then magic happens! Sean wakes up on an unknown magical island, transformed into a 2 headed Kangaroo. When Grace is stranded on that magical island, he falls once again in love with her. Sean proposes again and this time Grace accepts. This time, he knows he'll never let his true love go. Sean's faith in himself is shattered when Grace leaves him not once but twice. Yet he learns on the magical island that God has many plans for him as well as Grace. It's just a matter of not only believing in God's will, but also – and finally – in himself and his true calling.

Jester Jones (Yacht owner and skipper, early 40s) is a tyrant of a boss and when he meets Grace Upendo, immediately wants her due to her beauty, alone. When he employs her as a 1st mate aboard his yacht, he treats her like scum. Wanting only sex from Grace, he rapes her repeatedly. This man is a very simple character, a foil to Grace's beauty and budding confidence. As a single-string character, Jester quickly leaves the scene but because he's so ugly to her, he's not only important to this story, but our audience will always remember him.

Kylie Whipple (Australian best friend of Grace, 80s) is a confident, beautiful woman. When she meets Grace, she immediately makes friends with her. As narrator of some of our film, she helps us to understand Grace. She also warns her best friend that Jester Jones is a tyrant and that Grace should leave his employment immediately before he destroys what's left of her friend's confidence. When Grace does just that, Kylie is so proud of her she almost bursts. We HEAR but don't see Kylie too much in our story. As a fully drawn character, there is no real character arc. However, Kylie's

mature advice and actions help to propel Grace along her arc toward renewed self-confidence, self-love and finally, a loving marriage based on faith.

The Mechanicals of the 1-Act Play (ages – UNKNOWN!) – are animals who play humans in this adaptation of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (this comedy / tragedy was chosen on purpose. It reflects the mystical island as well as our various characters and plot). We meet Mo, Beth and Bottom. Mo plays The Man in the Moon, Beth plays the Lion, and Bottom plays himself. These characters help Sean Hope to realize that he must believe in his love for Grace. While these are not single-string characters at all, they work to help both Grace and Sean find each other again.

Various Other Characters – in addition to the above central characters, we meet many other mystical animal characters including fish that look somewhat like Robin Williams when Grace goes under the water to Fish School and human beings like the two tourists who Grace rescues aboard Jester Jones yacht who look and talk rather like characters from *Gilligan Island*. In India, we also meet Sister Theresa of Calcutta, now a famous Saint across the world, as well as many other humans including other novitiates of Sr Theresa, English and Indian lords and gentlemen of the Raj, various priests and an Archbishop in America, and more. All of these characters work to propel both Grace and Sean along their character arcs.

NOTE that the above are only a FEW of the characters (most are main characters). There are so many characters in this Animated Feature Film (more than 50 at last count) that each backstory is very short. If I’m working on a screenplay or Novel that has only a few characters, each main character will be about 1 page long. A half page or so for less important characters.

I start with the name, the age and the sex. Then, I try to visualize the character: how they talk, if they have an accent, what they like or dislike, what they need or want. And as I keep writing the other character descriptions, I’ll find out more about my Main Characters and I’ll add to them (or delete what I need to).

CHARACTER ARC – WHAT IS IT?

Again, a Character Arc is CRITICAL in understanding your characters. Let’s go back to TRUMAN. On that Live Action Show, the Character Truman started with a very simple idea: here’s a little infant that’s all of a sudden thrust into the Global Spotlight on a LIVE TV Show that’s broadcast every single moment of the Character’s life, without his knowledge. By the END of the TV Show, Truman knows that he’s being filmed. He becomes very courageous (he starts out being something of a ‘wimp’. He learns to defend himself. He learns to swim. He learns that he NEEDS his own life! And that results in the Climax and Final Denouement of that Feature Film – Truman becomes so brave and courageous that, in desperation, he demands and achieves HIS OWN LIFE! And that’s pretty much ‘The End’ for the great Feature Film.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF YOUR ANTAGONIST (THE ENEMY) – in many novels & movies, the ‘Enemy’ can be someone you actually fall in love with. Think of a Novel or Film that you really like. I’ll pick one at Random. How about ‘Superman’ – any of them! The Joker is always a tough guy and intelligent. He uses Kryptonite to take away Superman’s powers. By the middle of the Film, you actually LOVE this dastardly character and hope, perhaps, that he or she beats Superman! But by the end of the film, you’re rooting for Clarke Kent to again become the Man of Steel. See how it works? That’s how the writer,

the actor and the director want you to feel. They want you to ‘root’ for the enemy – and sometimes the enemy is actually ‘within’ your Protagonist who is the REAL star of the story.

Let’s pick another film to show how the Enemy can be internal. I think of Faceoff with our Hero being played by the Actor John Travolta (what a great actor!). He must chase the Terrorist played by Actor Nicolas Cage and win the day! But Cage assumes Travolta’s identity and even his Face! The ‘confusion’ among the Audience members is palpable. No one can figure out who the hero or enemy is until the very end. Even these two characters – the Protagonist and Antagonist – seem confused about who they really are. That’s all done on purpose, of course. And the resulting film? Amazingly complex and very, very powerful.

A few last examples of great Antagonists in Films and Novels: remember, your ‘Antagonist / Enemy’ doesn’t have to be a human being. In the feature film TWISTER, the Antagonist is the Tornado which our hero, his wife and the opposing Twister chasers pursue (that ‘Gang’ of opposing Twister Chasers is also the Enemy). The Twister is one of the best ‘enemies’ using simple Nature that has ever been written and produced. It’s PACKED with a variety of emotions: love, jealousy, hate, fear, worry – the entire spectrum of Human Emotions.

Or how about JAWS? Here, the ‘enemy’ is the Great White Shark. More examples? How about JURASSIC PARK? The Enemy is from many many sources, both Dinosaurs and Human Beings. And once again, this film is FILLED with emotions, so much so that when it’s finally over you wish it would start again.

Let me finish with my No One Global Bestselling Novel, Dolphin Song. For years, as I wrote the many, many versions of the Screenplay and the Novel, I could NOT decide who the Protagonist / Enemy was. Is it Jackie, Michael’s best friend and fishing buddy? Or a Gale? Or a thunderstorm on High Seas that sinks the Trawler and takes Michael’s life? Is it the ‘Thinking Ghost Dolphin?’ or someone or something that I’d never thought of.

Finally, it dawned on me: the enemy was a COMBINATION of all the above! Michael, one of the two protagonists in this novel, is in many ways his own enemy! Carol, who I finally invented to give an enemy to Michael’s American wife Dawn, is a riposte to what Dawn wants and needs – which is to cure her young son, Jason, from Traumatic Mutism (an inability to talk). Jackie is also his ‘own enemy’ due to his many character flaws. He becomes Dawn’s enemy and in some ways, Michael’s enemy, too. The ‘Thinking Ghost Dolphin’ – the one with the white painted spot on his head – is both an enemy and a Saviour.

The Novel (which you can find – and buy at our website, www.storylinesent.com – took me over five years to write. But I had a great deal of help from all of my friends who cared about me and believed in the story.

The moral of this section about Antagonists / Enemies – create one you BELIEVE IN. When you do, those that read your Novel or screenplay for the first time will believe in your Antagonist (and the huge Tension they bring to your story) just as much as you!

CHAPTER TWO – THE DRAMATIC QUESTION AND OTHER TERMS

The DRAMATIC QUESTION is the Single Most Important question you must ask yourself. It's also the Question that your readers and Cinema audience ask when they read or watch your story. If you DO NOT know the dramatic question in the entire story or in each beat of your novel or screenplay, no one will understand why your Central Characters do what they do, or their motivations.

The Dramatic Question changes a number of times throughout your story. So let's look an example of a simple Dramatic Question.

In “The King’s Speech”, a film that I use all the time to teach creative writing, the Dramatic Question is Quite Simple (if you have NOT watched “The King’s Speech” do that as soon as possible. It’s a wonderful film and if you like recent history, particularly English history, you’ll love this! You can find it on YouTube or simply Google “The King’s Speech” and you should be able to find it for free. At the time of this writing, in late 2024, you can find “The King’s Speech” by clicking here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1p3_3Cmz6c8).

I’m going to assume that you know something about this story. At the Start of the film, Prince Albert (also known as ‘Bertie’ by his Royal Family only, who is 2nd to the throne behind his brother, Prince David (who becomes King Edward VIII following his father’s death) must give a huge speech at a Horse Racing Event. Stuttering badly, Prince Albert finds that he cannot give the speech at all! The crowd in the stands and near him hiss and boo. Some worry that, should Prince Albert become King if another Great War breaks out with the Germans and their allies, there will be hell to pay. England and the Commonwealth will have no real royal leader at all.

Without going into detail (as I say, please watch this amazing feature film), Prince Albert eventually becomes George VI. His stuttering only increases. He is supported in his attempts to cure his stuttering not only by his good wife (the Young Queen Mother, Royal Mother to Queen Elizabeth II) but also by his two Royal daughters and a very few members of his Court. Now enter LIONEL a so-called ‘Liar’ who attempts to cure the new King’s stutter.

The Dramatic Question is therefore simple: Will King George allow himself to be treated by an uncertified ‘doctor’ who promises to cure his stutter? The answer when we all meet Lionel (who has his first meeting with a King who must call him Lionel and who Lionel insists he call Bertie, which is not allowed in Royal Circles) is: WE DON’T KNOW!!! But as the story of these two characters and the other minor characters unroll, the answer to that First Dramatic Question, and the Question itself, changes. That Important Critical Question moves on to:

- Will this New King allow himself to be treated for his stutter by a stranger? Answer: No!
- Will this New King allow Lionel to become a personal friend? Answer: No!

- Will the Royal King, the wife of the NEW King, help her husband to become friends with Lionel after the King fires the so-called ‘Lying Doctor?’ Answer: YES!
- Will Lionel support the King when that Royal man must make repeated Radio broadcasts to his Nation, England, as well as the Commonwealth on the BBC, using a technology that’s never been tried before? Answer: YES! ALWAYS!
- Does Lionel cure his Royal Friend’s Stutter and Speech impediment? ANSWER at the final Denouement of the story: YES, YES, YES!
- Does this Royal King allow Lionel to call him Bertie (when not in the presence of other Royal Subject except his Queen)? Answer: A FINAL YES AGAIN!

See how the Dramatic Question changes over time? This DRIVES YOUR STORY FORWARD! Some stories, very simple stories such as Action/Adventure tales, have a ONE very simple dramatic question, such as:

- Will the Sheriff, who is afraid of water and sharks, be able to kill the Great White Shark that is threatening his family and his town? JAWS
- Will the Mummy overcome some very strong characters in order to live forever? THE MUMMY
- Will the ‘new Captain’ of a spacecraft be able to save her crew, her new ‘daughter’ and herself by finally killing the dreaded space Alien? ALIEN
- Will Inspector Clouseau be able to defend himself against Kato (who is a good friend of his), as well as his various Bosses, and defeat his enemies to protect and then re-capture the Pink Panther Diamond? THE PINK PANTHER

See how simple these dramatic questions are? And of course, you can use these after you finish your story, to write and practice your Elevator Pitch (see above Chapter).

OTHER TERMS YOU’LL HEAR AND MUST USE

Here are only a FEW of them:

Dramatic Tension – think what would happen if The Prince (and then the King) in “The King’s Speech” never had a stutter or any other physical or mental problem. There’d be NO STORY AT ALL. Or what would happen if the Space Alien in ALIEN turned out to be a Human Being dressed in a fantastical costume? Again, NO STORY!

Dramatic Tension is the ‘glue’ that drives your story forward. It’s like a Propulsion system on a rocket, an aircraft or any propelled vehicle at all. Think of a story (a Novel or a Film) that has IMMENSE dramatic Action. How about JAWS? In that story, the Dramatic Tension never seems to waver. It took me years to learn this: but you must give A FEW PAGES OF PAUSE from the Dramatic Tension to let your reader / audience think through what they’ve just read / seen. Great Dramatic Tension thrusts the Audience / Reader into the World that you’ve created. It enables them to BECOME your characters and identify with their actions and Emotions. There’s no real Definition for Dramatic Tension. The only way you can understand this Term is to think how you feel during various events. Then ask yourself the questions:

- Why am I sad? What makes me feel that way?
- Why am I happy? Ditto above

- Why do I want to defend myself and my friends and family? From What? From Who? From something I can't really see or hear but which I'm so afraid of that I NEED to get ready to defend myself?
- I'm feeling MANY EMOTIONS. Why am I feeling them right now? Why do I feel so confused I can't think straight? (Then Identify what makes you feel that way).

That's your PERSONAL DRAMATIC TENSION operating in your Real Life! Emotion, and your reaction and actions due to those reactions, propel you to MORE ACTION. If you're happy, you want to keep feeling that way so you repeat what made you happy. If you're sad, you don't want to feel that way so you AVOID those situations that make you sad. Mind you, sometimes you're sad due to a death in your family or friends; or sad because someone you love is very, very ill; or sad because you know that you, too, have a horrible illness that might be terminal. These are moments of UNAVOIDABLE SADNESS AND PAIN. But these, too, motivate you to ACT! You go to a funeral or to a doctor. You pray or meditate. You decide to join a support group.

My point is this: all Emotions, good or bad, strong or weak, cause you to take some sort of Action. And that IS YOUR DRAMATIC TENSION.

Use these same emotions and situations in your Novel or Screenplay. If you do, you'll not only be true to yourself, your story and your characters, but when people read / see your story in a Novel or on the Big Screen, they'll be able to identify with everything you wrote. Why? Because they're all human beings too!

EMOTION – is NOT a term you'll find in most Text books about creative writing. But it's something that I always CALL OUT STRONGLY when I'm giving a course in Creative Writing. EMOTION is the LINK between all of us! Even people who are Emotionally Disabled have emotions. THINK ABOUT IT! Who do you know that does NOT have emotions? Even animals such as dogs, cats, rabbits, and almost any kind of animal have emotions. That's why stories with Dogs, Ponies, Horses, Rabbits, Fowl (such as Owls and Seagulls) are so popular. Humans often see themselves in the emotions of Animals! Why? Because most of us care for and protect our Pet Animals. Why do we? Because they usually love us unconditionally! It's a sort of Circle – a Circle of life. We are all born. We have mothers and fathers. We may have sisters and brothers. Many of us will care for a number of pets over the course of our lives. Pets die and they teach us that we're not immortal. Humans die and leave their Pets to grieve just like we grieve when someone close to us dies. Some of us believe that there's an Afterlife. Others do not. Some people – and animals, too – believe in War not Peace. Some believe in Peace not War.

EMOTION is the glue that binds us together. It's like Mitochondria at the Cell Level. And it's been proven by scientists that every living thing has Mitochondria. This means that we're all somehow 'related'. Dogs and pets of every kind, insects, whales, dolphins, owls, seagulls – every living thing in this world (and maybe on other worlds) are distantly related to Human Beings.

And that's why Emotions are something of a Circle. They're in all of us – all living things. They influence our Actions and our Beliefs. They are something INDEFINABLE that makes us all who we are. Emotions can haunt us, or make us laugh, or come back to bite us

when we least expect it. Emotions are the **POWER** that we hold to make people like us, love us, hate us, or not pay any attention to us at all.

For that reason, **USE EMOTION ALL THE TIME** when you're writing. **FEEL** what you're writing as you do it. Sometimes, I'm so very sad as I write about my 'Missing' partner, Carm (who has Dementia) that I start to cry at the Keyboard. I'll be so upset that I can't write anymore. I take a break and might not get back to work for another day or so. But that Emotion, that sadness and grief, also drives me to write more effectively. With more compassion and tolerance. And this brings me to other Terms that you'll hear and sometimes see:

Ticking Clock – what in God's name is a Ticking Clock in creative writing? You **KNOW THIS** because you've either read it or seen it. It's a very common method to increase Dramatic Tension. Think of another great feature film, one with Bruce Willis in it. How about "Die Hard"? Now we're talking about a **TICKING BOMB** that will go off – and we know it! – at the end of the film! That's what a ticking clock is all about. **INCREASE DRAMATIC TENSION THROUGHOUT YOUR STORY**. As the story goes on, your Audience / Readers can actually **HEAR** that ticking in their heads. And they'll start to read quicker as the Ticking gets louder, or they'll sit on the edge of their seats as the Film nears a final Conclusion. Simple, Yes? Haha! No. Try it. It's all about Timing. And it isn't easy to write at all – but when you Master this simple Term, it's great fun to write!

REVEAL – think of a Curtain, any kind of Curtain. Say a Shower Curtain. You walk into the Bathroom and the Curtain is pulled closed. You didn't do it. And behind the Curtain, the shower is on. You see a shadow and you think it's your friend/partner/wife/husband. You decide to play a joke on them. Covering your eyes, you suddenly pull back the Curtain! And what do you find? A **DEAD BODY**. **BLOOD** is all over the Curtain and the shower unit / bathtub.

And that's a big reveal! Alfred Hitchcock uses this Term – this Method – all the time in his many films. **PSYCO** is the best example I can think of. The above Reveal occurs at about the Mid-point – half way through the Film. I remember seeing it the first time when I was just a kid. It scared the BeJaysus out of me (as well as my mother). In that same film, **PSYCHO**, Hitchcock uses Reveals over and over again. Watch this great film if you want to be scared to death! I dare you too! Or how about Hitch's many other films? "NorthxNorthwest", "The Birds", "Rear Window". All have **BIG REVEALS**, and often, the Biggest is at the very end of the film.

Rules – this took me **YEARS** of study to get my head around. What a Rules, after all? Rules are in a Game – any game. Baseball, Football, Soccer, Pool, Golf. But in creative writing?

'Rules' are usually about your Characters. They are the 'Rules' that your characters **MUST** live by until they are strong enough – or change / learn enough – to break them. Let's use **JAWS** as an example. That great Sherrif is afraid of water and sharks. He can't really swim. **BUT** by the end of the film, he has **NO CHOICE** but to swim in the ocean. He faces his fear and **KILLS** the Great White Shark with his rifle.

Or how about Charlie Brown in many Peanuts Comics or TV series? Charlie faces many rules. One is that in the Autumn, he must kick an American Football that his good friend Lucy holds. He is **CONVINCED** that this season, he's going to kick that ball at least a

mile! Lucy gets down on her knees and hold the football perfectly. “Come on, Charlie Brown. You can do it! Just kick it!” Charlie runs up, plants his back foot on the ground and KICKS AS HARD AS HE CAN. And of course, at the last-minute Lucy pulls the football away and Charlie Brown lands flat on his back. This is a very simple rule that Charles Schultz created. It’s also great, great fun!

One last example of RULES. In 2001: A Space Odyssey (the Feature Film written by Arthur C Clarke) RULES ARE BROKEN ALL THE TIME. All sorts of Rules. Newtonian Physics and Mathematics; Human Nature; the Nature of God; the FACT that there is life on other planets or moons. Clarke is a science fiction writer and Sci-Fi writers break rules all the time. But first, WRITERS MUST ESTABLISH FACTUAL RULES. This story begins with the almost Absurd as great Apes face a black Monolith that makes them understand that the Jaw Bone of an Ass is a weapon. But IT’S ALSO REAL! Scientists have PROVEN that Apes killed each other using many sorts of weapons.

Einstein proved that Speed is NOT INFINITE. Nor is Mass or Time. Clarke Establishes this rule first when we see the American Inter-stellar Space Vehicle moving away from the sun. BUT CLARKE BREAKS THIS RULE when his main character, Dave, takes a Space Pod into a Black Hole and breaks not only the Speed of Light but goes down a wormhole to a distant time and Galaxy. Then, when Dave is much older, he ‘dies’ and somehow, as if by Magic, goes back to Earth again though it’s lightyears away. He becomes ‘A God and Guardian’ of the Earth. And that’s where the story ends. WITHOUT a real final denouement only a Reveal and something of a resolution.

‘SATISFACTION’ – you’ll hear this word bounced around by agents, producers and those that are familiar with the publishing / film industries. Satisfaction is a term that I find rather difficult to really understand. I do know that, when I finish a novel, a film or any work of non-fiction, and I absolutely like or love it, I’m ‘satisfied with that story. If a Book I’ll keep it on my bookshelf. If I see a great film in a Cinema, I’ll try to buy the DVD. I’m SATISFIED, but satisfaction is personal and is only one opinion.

Because ‘satisfaction’ is so subjective, when you write a novel, book or screenplay, have a few people read it before you pitch it to any professional – just like I do. If your readers are ‘satisfied’ with what you’ve written, then pitch it. If they’re NOT ‘satisfied’ consider rewriting. What I always do is this: I’ll ask them to give me their written opinion and notes on what they like / don’t like. I’ll really consider anyone’s notes / opinion. Then, I might take those many notes and make a short-list. I DO NOT agree with everything they’ve given to me. But when I do, I’ll tweak or rewrite from the very start of my creative piece all the way to the end. Then I’ll reread that, and maybe rewrite again. And only, when I’M SATISFIED will I finally pitch it.

Ellipse – let’s say that you find a large piece of your story too ‘boring’ or unnecessary to actually ‘show or tell’ your audience / readers? Then do what my favorite Director, Mister Hitchcock – always did in many of his award-winning Movies. USE AN ELLIPSE. The best example I can think of is North by Northwest. At the very end of the film, at the final denouement and Conclusion, our ‘so-called Spy’ the Blonde that our Hero, the Advertising executive has fallen in love with, SLIP on Mount Rushmore. She struggle as she clings to a Cliff edge. Our Hero grabs her by the hand and it looks like both Man and Woman are going to fall hundreds of feet to their deaths! BUT – and a Big BUT – our Hero grabs her by the

wriest and tells her that he'd never leave her. Pulling her hard toward him, HITCHCOCK CUTS this action and ELLIPSES into a Train Sleeper where the PULL is continued. Our Hero pulls our Spy Heroine up into the Top Bunk of their small bedroom. And we know that they're now married! Hitchcock SUSPENDED THE ACTION on Mount Rushmore for many reasons. First, the Audience KNEW that both Hero and Heroine would be saved or the film wouldn't be 'satisfying'. Second, we didn't need to see the story from that point through the final scene in the Sleeper Bedroom. Instead, he used an ELLIPSE to make the entire ending much, much more effective and breathtaking.

McGuffin – once again I resort to Hitchcock and this time back to PSYCHO and this example is a SPOILER if you haven't seen that Movie. At the very beginning of the Film, our Heroine – a Femme Fatale – steals a stack of Cash from her Employer. Stealing a car to make her get-away, she drives all night. Exhausted, she finds a 'hidden' hotel somewhere just off a local Highway. And this is where Hitchcock's Plot becomes a 'lie and a ruse'. The Audience thinks that the story is going to be about the Femme Fatale and if she can get away with her theft (grand larceny – and she will face prison if she's caught, as well as a possible Murder charge) or not. BUT that's where Hitch and his screenplay writer catch everyone off guard! The Femme Fatale is Murdered in the shower at that small hotel. And that's where the STORY REALLY STARTS! This film is not about the Femme Fatal at all! It's all about Madness and a Man who dresses up as his Mother to protect his own sanity and the fact that his mother died YEARS AGO. This McGuffin was made all the more real because the famous Actress Janet Leigh. Not one member of the Audience ever thought that Ms Leigh, who played the Femme Fatale Marion Crane, would die toward the very beginning of the story. She was a highly paid actress and usually the Lead Actress in most of her films! Which is EXACTLY why Alfred Hitchcock Cast her in this Role! He wanted to fool the audience and he DID! I wish I could write and direct like Hitchcock and his screenwriter. But wishes are only for those who want to fool themselves.

Hollywood 3 Act Structure – I'll finish our Terms with this short and simple phrase. Most Hollywood films and many books have a definite Beginning, Middle and End. Why? First, they're much easier – and logical – to write and Second, they have the makings of Classic Books and Films. Three Act Structures go back to the Greeks! In the Next Chapter I'll write about this type of Structure and, if you're a first time Novelist or Screenwriter, you MUST learn to write this way. As I say when I'm teaching writing to a class of students, "Learn 3 Act Structures first! Then, write any way you like. It's much less confusing to you to learn how to write in a so-called 'Hollywood' style. Woe be to you if you don't!"

Speaking of Greek writers and legends, here's one last Term I can't help writing about:

Deux Ex Machina – this ancient method of resolving any type of conflict or ENDING a Greek Play is NO LONGER USED although I've used it in certain Novels both as a personal experiment and to surprise the Audience. I'm not going to write an example. Instead, I'll simply make something up:

Let's say that you are a Greek God or Goddess. You're husband, call him Atlas, was being held captive by the Trojans. They demanded that you give up Ancient Athens in return for your husband. You, of course, say NO! I WILL NOT GIVE UP MY HUSBAND because you will sacrifice him to your Gods! War breaks out between the Greek and the Trojans. The

Trojans manage to land near that Ancient Capital. They start to burn down Greek Temples, as well as sac and pillage many close parts of that City. They also rape any women that they can capture. Finally, they capture part of Athens. You, as the Queen of Greece, pray to your Gods and also Atlas (as well as Hercules and Zeus). You might pray: “Please my dear Gods! Defend your Holy City of Athens and free Atlas who, I pray, is still alive. I LOVE HIM AND DON’T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO! Most of our armies have been defeated by the Trojan King!”

At that moment, a Greek General runs into the Throne Room. He’s mortally wounded and is bleeding from the chest and head. He bows then staggers, finally kneeling to you. “Queen, our armies have been defeated! We must hand over Athens to make peace and prevent all of our Citizens from being slaughtered.”

You, as Queen, realize you have only one option left. You call your trusted Secretary. You write a letter to the Trojan King telling him that soon, he will die at the Hand of Hercules and her husband Athens. When you are finished dictating your letter, you seal it with candle wax. Then you pull a bottle of poison from a drawer and mix it with Red Wine in a Goblet.

“General, I have now done everything humanly possible to protect our Holy City. I raise this Cup of Wine and Hemlock to you.”

As the General watches her drink, he dies, falling to the floor. The Secretary, a Trojan in Disguise, rips the letter in two. He laughs sarcastically. “My King will not die! For it is I WHO AM NOW THE KING OF GREECE AND ATHENS!”

Taking off his brown robe, he REVEALS a Red and White robe. A Trojan General with his troops runs in, placing the Golden Crown of Greece on the Trojan King’s head.

“Sir,” the General says, bowing low. “I have reports coming in that says a local mountain is beginning to spew smoke and Lava! Sir, there is no other option. We must vacate Athens before the entire city is overrun by lava and ash!”

The Trojan King laughs again. “You fool! I am the King of Athens! That mountain will listen to me and only me!”

At that, everyone in that room hears a single Voice coming from the open Window. “Ye be no King in Athens!” the Voice calls. “I am the RULER of the Heavens and much much mightier than you will ever be!”

In the Greek theatre, many years ago, a wooden platform was lowered to the stage. On it were the actors who played the Greek Gods. Our action now continues as the platform is lowered. We see, standing on that platform and in costume, Zeus, Hercules and Atlas. Zeus: “You have sinned against me and all of your Gods! Vanish from my sight before my sons kill you all.”

Trojan King: “Me Vanish! You vanish for you are not MY GOD!”

Hercules and Atlas remove their swords from their scabbards. They climb off the platform and advance toward the Trojan King and the Trojan warriors. Hercules: “Be these men here? I think I smell fear in all of these enemies of ours.” Atlas: “Then the fear shall kill them just as I kill this fake Athenian King Trojan!”

Atlas thrusts with his sword. It never touches the Trojan King but the King falls to the ground, blood spewing from his Chest. He looks up at Atlas and smiles one last time. “Ah, but I have a present for you, my dear Atlas Child. Look! Your wife is dead.”

As the Trojan King dies, and Hercules begins to kill all of the Trojan officers and soldiers, Atlas lifts up his Queen. Kissing her gently, she wakes. “Oh, husband! I have been praying for a great miracle and now, the Gods have answered! It is you!”

Atlas: “And so it is! Look, the rightful King of Athens has come back to life, too.”

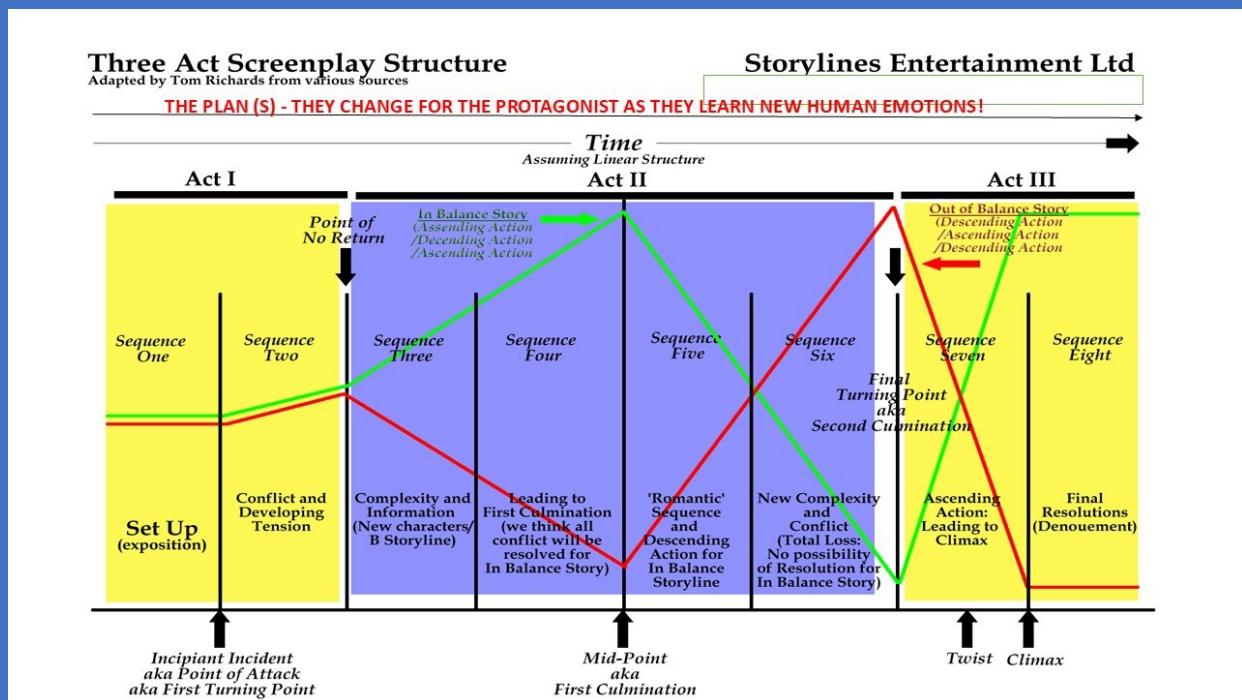
Then, right before the end, the Chorus – symbolising Greek Citizens and some of their Athenian Democratic Senators, marches onto the Stage. The Senator bows to the audience and speaks in summary of the Play.

Senator: “Do not trust those who would fool you. Be kind to your neighbor and fellow Citizens. Make war as little as possible. This is the summary of this play by our fellow Citizen Sophocles.”

As the Audience applauds, the Playwright comes out and bows. Then all of the actors, dead or alive, as well as the Gods get up and bow. They bow again as a boy with a large sign walks out. “THE END” the sign reads. The boy bows and says, “We have wine in the Antechamber for those who want it as well as bread and grapes. Take heart! For this is not the end of the day! A new play by Aristotle will start here in one hour. The end, I say. The end!” The audience applauds and as they do I sign off today as a simple teacher and author. THE END to this Second Chapter and on with the Third Chapter!

Chapter Three – the 3 Act Hollywood Structure

Please study the Chart below. I'll be referring to it many, many times during the course of this chapter. To develop this, I used a wide variety of sources, too many to list here. Some of what that Chart tells you is obvious, and is used by many Hollywood Screenwriters (and many famous Novelists, too). I first developed this many years ago, when I was a Guest Lecturer in Screenwriting at Ireland's National University of Ireland Maynooth. So may I thank the great, intelligent students that I taught! You taught me more than I taught you! And thank you for your help.



If I were seeing you 'Face-to-Face' in a 12 week screenwriting course (with classes 3 times per week) I'd spend AT LEAST THREE OF THESE WEEKS – 9 SEPARATE ONE HOUR LESSONS – GOING THROUGH THE ABOVE CHART. But this is a 'digital book' so all I can really do is review the most important aspects.

Start at the very left of the Chart, in the Yellow Space and then look at the rest of this Chart.

A 3 Act Structure – is exactly what it says on the Tin. It's your story divided up into THREE ACTS – not one, not two, not four or five or more! So let's stick with this Chart – it's relatively easy to understand.

Those 3 Acts are divided up into 8 separate 'SEQUENCES'. This makes understanding any screenplay – or writing your screenplay or novel – even easier!

Let's assume we're talking about a screenplay. Your screenplay must have no more than 120 pages of text in standard 12 point Times New Roman, double-spaced of course (it's easier for anyone to read this way, and is an Industry Standard!) Each page is One minute of screen time. So that means that Act One is 30 minutes long – 30 printed pages of your screenplay. Act Two is Double that length or 60 minutes (and this is the REAL part of your

story and the hardest to write). Act Three is also 30 minutes long. Acts vary in time and length, depending on what you're writing. Horror films tend to be no more than 100 pages long (100 minutes Max!) as are Many Many Comedies. But drama? And that's where we'll start. We'll start with a fairly standard Mystery Film that's a drama.

Now go back to the yellow Box on the very left-hand side. Act One, Sequence One, is your EXPOSITION. As I was taught many years ago by a Hollywood screenwriter (and Novelist): "Tom, use an eyedropper to tell your Audience what they NEED TO KNOW RIGHT NOW! Save a great deal and tell them that a bit at a time throughout Acts One and Two – and MAYBE a BIG REVEAL about their biggest personal Problem in Act Three which influences the dialogue, action and Resolution of your screenplay."

That I always try to do. So how do I explain WHAT IS NECESSARY to tell in Act One? This time, let's use the first STAR WARS MOVIE. When we first meet Luke, he's in the desert, living at his uncle's home. Young, brusque, and precocious, he doesn't know what to do with his life. His father wants him to stay at home to help him with his Trade but Luke doesn't want that at all! And that's about all we know in the First Sequence of Act One. Not much, but it's highly important to the balance of the film. The rest of Sequence One is all about the Empire. When Luke sees Princess Leah as a Hologram, that's when he decides to fight for her life (he falls in love with her at first sight). But the main CONFLICT HERE is that his Uncle doesn't want Luke to go anywhere! He insists that Luke stay on his home Planet well away from the dangers of Intergalactic War!

Of course, we learn much more about Luke Skywalker in this First Sequence. His last name is a real Giveaway! Luke loves to tinker with electronics. His two friends, 3CPO and R2-D2, are Robots after all, and Luke has to repair them all the time! :Luke is also very good in any kind of fight! He's good with his fists, physically strong, is well-balanced and loves to fight with swords. This is ALL WE KNOW from his backstory at this point (Luke's Exposition) and that's MORE than enough. These character details help to set up the rest of this Space Cowboy Film.

Now look to the right of the Yellow Box, and well below the Chart. You'll see **INCIPIENT INCIDENT** in bold letters. So what does THIS IMPORTANT TERM MEAN?

Put it this way: if it weren't for an Incipient Incident that the writer creates, there would be no screenplay or any story at all! When Luke sees Princess Leah's hologram, begging for help and falls for her, that's the **INCIPIENT INCIDENT** of this film. Look – let's say that his Uncle had never purchased the little Robot and that Luke had never found the Hologram in R2-D2. What would have happened? **ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!**

The same goes with most any film (or Novel) you can think of. Take TRUMAN. The Incipient Incident (also called an Inciting Incident) is when a loose heating grate falls off and almost hits Truman on the head! That's when this story actually starts. Or how about JAWS? If the island Beach Resort, and the teenage girl that was bitten in two, hadn't been visited by this Rogue Great White Shark, there would be no more story! And we're talking very, very early in the story, in this example! Spielberg wrote it this way on purpose. He wanted to know that the Audience was seeing something very different. A horror story but one starring a Great White Shark! Ouch – and here let me talk a bit about the Music or most feature film scores.

The composer of the score, renowned Academy Award Winner John Williams, explained his initial explanation to the Great Director in an interview with classic.com. He said, “And he (Spielberg) came to my room at Fox Studios, and he said, ‘What are you going to do for the shark?’ and I played E, F, E, F, E, F, D, F and so on.

“And he said, ‘You can’t be serious?’ I said, ‘Well, I think when the basses and celli of the orchestra, maybe supported by tympani or contrabassoon [play it], you might be convinced that this is scary enough. Er, let’s try it.’”

And it was! It’s become one of – if not THE – most famous Film Theme Tune of all time! When I hear it on the radio or watch that film again, the tune makes me sit up and I get goosebumps everywhere! MUSIC is a true Character! A great score reflects the Emotion in the film, at almost every moment in the Film. Think of PSYCHO again. The music goes ‘up and down’ – from horrifying to sad to silence to hope and on and on until it’s horrifying again at the end.

War Films use GREAT BATTLE MUSIC created mostly by British composers. Created as ‘propaganda’ for the British, Commonwealth and Allied nations/public, great scores reflected not only the battle but their leaders. Think of THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN or SINK THE BISMARCK! or 611 SQUADRON – any of them! Music, many times, makes the film tick! Or how about Comedy films. I think of THE PINK PANTHER or my all time favorite (and my father’s too – we’d watch any number of films together): THOSE MAGNIFICENT MEN IN THEIR FLYING MACHINES and, while I’m at it: THE GREAT RACE.

When you’re writing your screenplay (or even a Novel) you can Type in the Title of a copywrote piece of Music. BUT DO NOT USE ANY OF THE LYRICS or the actual recording! Those are all copyrighted. To use that music, even when you’re pitching it, you must contact the holder of the copywrite directly or his / her agent. This can be a very expensive part of a film’s budget, depending on the holder of the copywrite and how a particular song did globally. Sometimes, you can approach that copywrite holder and tell him/her you have a very limited budget and simply want to ‘pitch’ it to a professional. They may allow you to pitch for nothing and leave the negotiation up to the Professionals when the time comes. But back to the graph:

SECOND SEQUENCE LEADING TO THE END OF ACT ONE / BEGINNING OF ACT TWO: in a drama like STAR WARS, the action is all RISING ACTION. This means that your story gets more and more exciting. You fill these 15 pages or so with nothing but Action and a little bit of Dialogue.

A BIG NOTE ON DIALOGUE HERE: once again, and as I was taught years ago, I was TOLD that Dialogue only ENHANCES the action. Just like Exposition, it should be used sparingly. If you write a LONG paragraph of Dialogue, it’s way too long. Write SHORT SENTENCES just like people talk. Use ‘accents’ if your characters demand you too. ALLUDE TO THEM in a sort of ‘short hand’. DON’T think that the readers of your story are Stupid. They’re not! They’ll understand what you’re writing if you write effectively and sparingly.

END OF ACT ONE: THE POINT OF NO RETURN!

Now we're at the end of Act One and the Point of No Return. In Star Wars, the end of Act One is when Luke leaves his home planet and heads to the Empire's Home Planet which is also the HQ for the coming War. In The King's Speech, it's when Bertie allows Lionel to treat him for his Stuttering. In the wonderful musical, A SOUND OF MUSIC, it's when our young Heroine is FORCED to go to take care of The Captain's Children (and right then, they begin to fall in love with each other.

Points of No Return often start TOWARD the End of Act One and move on well into Act Two! There's no written rule about how long the Point of No Return should be. So use your own judgement on what makes the best story when you write this!

AND INTO ACT TWO!

Now your story REALLY starts and this is, based on my own experience, the hardest to write – ACT TWO, according to our Chart Above is FOUR ENTIRE SEQUENCES LONG! Which means it's about 60 printed pages long. An entire Hour of your Feature Film. So tread carefully!

Much of Act Two is written rather slowly. When I start writing my Act Two, I refer back to my various 'road maps' (see the first chapters) over and over again. I then start to tweak these roadmaps (particularly the Step Outline when I'm writing a screenplay, or the chapter breakdown if a Novel) to reflect what I've written in Act One. And as I continue to write and edit Act Two, I'll tweak those 'road maps' over and over again.

So let's take a brief look at writing Act Two.

The Third Sequence follows the Point of No Return and is usually a BIT more Exposition and a LOT more action, depending on the Genre you're writing.

BEFORE MOVING ON ONE MORE IMPORTANT NOTE; EVERYTHING you write in a screenplay is CRITICALLY IMPORTANT. You're not writing a 350-page novel. At the most, you're writing a 120-page screenplay, including the Cover Page. Therefore, even the smallest detail you write must be planned! A flower (name the type – a Rose perhaps – but the color is usually left up to the Set Designer); a Map – where? Where is North?; a ring, necklace or other jewelry your Major characters wear; the time of day and where it takes place (which is why each scene starts like this: INT. TOM'S OFFICE, EYERIES VILLAGE, DAY.) The Weather (it's pouring outside again); the temperature if it's important (it's a FREEZING day in Eyeries Village. Snow tops all of the nearby hills and the Wind is up to 140MPH throwing up Horsetails onto the Nearby Rocks); What your characters wear if important: Tom is dressed in Survival Gear, all Yellow and is wearing a Personal Flotation Device; THEN the action: Tom ventures out onto the Stormy Bay of Coulagh, Right below the Village, in his large Sailing Yacht, IN A RUSH. The Yacht is swept up by an incoming Gale. The boat lists hard toward the water. We see Tom being thrown overboard, SCREAMING IN PAIN, blood coming from his head; THEN we do a bit of dialogue; TOM Mayday, mayday, mayday! PAN PAN PAN. MAYDAY! Does anyone read? (Tom also holds a weather proof radio in one hand.) COAST GUARD That's affirmative. Where are you? TOM My Boat IN THE RUSH has sunk! Send a chopper at once! COAST GUARD Will send that ASAP as soon as we rescue a Trawler crew. Stand by on this channel....

And so forth. MAKE THINGS QUICK when Action is rising. Slower when it's falling. See our Graph above to discover when Action is most likely Rising or Falling in a Drama (for Comedy Rising and Falling Action are often REVERSED).m

Now back to a Great Example of not only a Screenplay Analysis but what you should do with all of Act TWO! And please see the Appendix Two! Let's review Act One of THELMA AND LOUISE, one of the best Movies I've ever seen and the REAL START of the Strong Women Sub-Genre!

Act One Incipient Incident – you can read it yourself. But Thelma gets hungry and wants her Best Friend Louise to drive the Thunderbird off the Freeway to a Truck Stop. AND THIS, of course, leads us directly to the Point of No Return at the end of Act One!

Note – and I've not covered this yet, but see the PLAN LINE at the Top of the Graph? All major Characters also have a PLAN of some kind which changes. In Act One, the Plan for both Thelma and Louis was to have some FUN for a change. They're both bored with Life. Thelma is bored with her angry, abusive Husband. The Plan in THELMA AND LOUISE change over the course of the Film. But let's keep going and see how...

Act Two – now, this is where the story really starts. The POINT OF NO RETURN is when Louise kills that terrible Scumbag who wanted to Rape Thelma. Louis uses a handgun she'd concealed first in her Thunderbird (WHICH IS A HUGE CHARACTER IN THIS STORY. That T-Bird represents FREEDOM for both Thelma & Louis and, at the very end – SPOILER – represents an ANGEL delivering them to a Heaven of their Choice and away from the Fires and renewed imprisonment of a US Federal Jail. Needless to say, PLAN A – their plan to have Fun Failed miserably.

That Point of No Return runs through the next few scenes as these Very Independent women race down the Freeway toward an unplanned Escape to Somewhere. But Where?

Act Two – Sequence Three – here's where the Dramatic Question really starts to Soar! In Act One it was the same as Plan A – Let's have FUN! But now THE DRAMATIC QUESTION IS: WILL THEY BE ABLE TO ESCAPE. And the Interim Plan changes to: WE NEED TO GET MORE MONEY (they're almost broke). At this point, Louise is still the Leader of this small Gang (Wait for it: those Roles are going to change! Which makes this story even more exciting! Thelma's backstory is that she's something of a Wimp. She will NOT stand up to her abusive husband at all. Louise always gets mad at Thelma for refusing her advice and various invitations to get out and have fun. But Louise never complies until they decide to go camping together. It's THEN, back in Act One, that Thelma finally leaves a note for her horrid husband essentially telling him to FUCK THE HELL OFF!

The Husband's story is what writers call a B Story. It is much less important than our A Story which is all about Thelma and Louise. Briefly, the Husband Darryl is FLABBERGASTED when his wife Thelma disobeys him and takes off with Louise. When Detectives visit him, wanting to know his wife's location if he hears from her, Darryl instantly agrees. He hopes to receive MONEY from her arrest or maybe, if she's killed, from Insurance. But what does Darryl get in the end? Only HUMILIATION! Haha!

Sequence Three is LOADED WITH COMPLICATIONS! And that's another term and secret. A story without COMPLICATIONS is boring! Nothing really happens! So, if

your bored when you read your writing change it by adding Complications. In T&L Sequence Three, some of the complications are:

- Hal, the Detective, starts to investigate the Murder. Hal, in many ways, is a ONE STRING CHARACTER meaning that he's not very deep (though he is very HUMAN. He Identifies with both T&L and, when they decide to commit suicide together, does his level best to stop them)
- When they go to the Truck stop, they execute options to try to raise some cash. Thelma phones Darryl (he's out screwing some chick somewhere so no answer) and Louise phones her absolutely terrific and supportive boyfriend, Jimmy. But no answer either. With these options exhausted, they both realize that they're completely on their own!
- In these few scenes, Thelma & Louise's loving relationship falters badly. They're both angry at each other and it seems that they no longer trust each other. This is the VERY BEGINNING of a huge LEAP in their characters.
- Later, at a Hotel they spend almost all of their remaining cash on a hotel room. Thelma wants to turn both of them into the police (a sign of how scared she is and concerned for her future). Louise thinks that's a Stupid idea – they'll both go to jail for the rest of their lives! Louise points out that Thelma will be tried as a close accessory to the crime! There's blood all over the Scumbag's car – and some of that is from Thelma!
- Meanwhile, Hal puts out an APB on the two women who are suspected of Murder in the 1st Degree.
- Right here PLAN B now incorporates A DEFINITE PLAN FORWARD. Not only is that Plan B about getting more money, it's about an ESCAPE PLAN: LOUISE TELLS THELMA THEY'RE ESCAPING TO MEXICO!

Act Two, Sequence Four – and Forward to the Midpoint of the Story

- Now we need to see these strong ladies actioning their plans. Louise gets through to Jimmy who agrees to send her some Money by Western Union. Louise gives him an address to send that needed cash to.
- Thelma phones Darryl at the urging of Louise so that Darryl will think the situation Normal. Darryl screams at his wife telling her to COME HOME NOW! Thelma tells her husband to FUCK OFF! And hangs up.
- Then another Complication and a wonderful 'WRINKLE'. The HITCHHIKER shows up (this is the actor's first appearance in a Major Feature Film: Introducing BRAD PITT!)
- Louise, egged on by Thelma who thinks J.D. (played by Brad Pitt) is GORGEOUS and a hell-of-a-lot better looking – and probably a better Lay than Darryl, agrees to take the Hitchhiker along for the ride. He says he has some cash – turns out he has almost nothing.
- Meanwhile, Hal the Detective tracks down Louise by finding her Apartment. He sees a picture of Jimmy (which means that Hal will someday find him and question this Boyfriend). Hal also interview Darryl and some restaurant staff. His investigation to find and charge the strong women continues to Plan.
- THE MONEY PLAN is finally resolved when Jimmy meets Louise and gives her a wad of Cash. We now know how much they both love and trust each other.

- Louise refuses to tell Jimmy where they're going or ANYTHING about what they plan in order to Protect him. This reinforces their emotional commitment to each other.
- MIDPOINT FOR THELMA – and here it is, folks! Thelma's midpoint. She makes love to J. D. (if you're a woman or a gay man, wouldn't you love to make love to Brad Pitt! Look at all the MUSCLE on the man! The Hitchhiker takes off Thelma's wedding ring. This FREES THELMA AT LAST TO BE THE WOMAN SHE'S ALWAYS WANTED AND NEEDED TO BE! This is the start of her Personal Redemption!

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT MID-POINT: A midpoint is usually this: to An Audience of a film or a reader of a novel, the main Character(s) seem to get what they want! In Thelma's case, it's FULL FREEDOM from Darryl and a real Future Again! But! And an important but. This is only HALF WAY through the story. This means that What they Seem to Get isn't what they Eventually Get . Nor is it necessarily what these Character Need or Want! At the very end of this Feature Film, Thelma & Louise have no choice but to get what they DON'T WANT! They both want to live and lead full lives. Instead??? They get a final reckoning that no one except the Screenwriter (before he sold this story) knew about.

SEQUENCE FIVE, ACT TWO

The Plans stay the same from this point on! They're still going to need more money (despite Jimmy's help) and they still plan to go to Mexico to Escape the FBI!

This is also called the Romantic Sequence. It's now a time to let the audience / reader take a BIG BREATH and think about the story before this. It's a time to 'Assimilate' the action, the dialogue, the character's and their objectives. In these few scenes, we can think that not a great deal happens. But WE'RE WRONG! This is the 'Set Up' to Sequence Six and rising action that leads us to the end of Act Two and the 2nd CULMINATION. Which is the Final Turning Point.

- Thelma is so enamored with Her Hitchhiker that she shares confidences and secrets with him – things she shouldn't.
- Jimmy goes home after telling Louise that he wants to go with her. But his loving girlfriend knows that it's impossible (my personal suspicion is that, right here, Louise KNOWS that she's going to die and maybe Thelma will die too).
- Hal continues his pursuit of the wanted criminals
- Thelma meets Louise in the hotel restaurant. Thelma realizes that she left the Wad of Money that Jimmy had given to them in her room with J.D. They go back to their room. J.D. IS GONE WITH THE CASH. Which means that:
- They're plan to Get Money FAILED!
- So... the pair have no other option but to take off in their Thunderbird (and here's where it gets really exciting and interesting!)
- NEW PLAN – LET'S ROB A STORE OR MAYBE A BANK!
- But this Plan isn't to the liking of Louise. They're already criminals. A Robbery would only cause more trouble with the police. Besides, they'd both be identified.
- THIS TIME, THELMA DISAGREES! And now, Thelma BECOMES THE WOMAN SHE'S ALWAYS WANTED TO BE – A VERY, VERY STRONG WOMAN AND NOW THE 'SMALL GANG' LEADER!

- As Louise waits in the T-Bird, Thelma Robs a small Convenience Store. As Thelma jumps back into the Car with a Bag full of Cash, she tells Louise (as an order): “Don’t look at me like that! We needed it! Now drive us to Mexico!” Louise does and is AMAZED by the change in her Best Friend.
- Hal gets a positive ID of their location by seeing a Video of Thelma Robbing the Store (and we know he’ll soon be in Hot Pursuit)

Sequence Six, Act Two

Drumroll PLEASE! This is the final ACTION PACKED, EMOTIONAL sequence before the Final Turning Point! And wow, is it good!

- Jimmy is picked up by some detectives at his apartment
- Cops stop J.D. He takes out his wallet which is loaded with Cash.
- The women are in the T-Bird fleeing toward Mexico. Thelma is now the one who is calm and collected – she’s the one who is doing all the thinking
- Jimmy is interviewed by the Fuzz – he does NOT know where the women are but tells them to find J.D. He’ll KNOW WHERE THEY’RE HEADED
- The girls in the T-Bird pass a Truck. The Truck driver looks down at the girls in the open top T-Bird and LEERS suggestively. The women decide to get even. At least when they see the bastard again.
- More complications – Hal manages to telephone the women and talks to Louise. She refuses to tell him where they’re going. But she knows that the LAW IS CLOSING IN FAST! This raises the STAKES for the women.

A NOTE ABOUT ‘STAKES’ – THAT TERM, ‘STAKES’ is what we all have when we risk something. Let’s say you bet \$10 on a horse to win at a local Horse Race. The ‘Stakes’ in this case are your ‘Odds’. So if the horse is 10 to 1 and you win, you’ll get 100 bucks for your bet. Which is very similar to Stakes in stories. The higher the stakes for your Main Characters, the more they risk and the higher the odds that they’ll lose. In this case, Thelma and Louise both begin to realize that the stakes are so high that they’re both highly likely to die!

- The two women discuss turning themselves in. But this is ‘out of character’ for both of them, particularly now. They agree to keep going to Mexico. This is a critical moment for Thelma. The OLD THELMA would have gone to the Police. The NEW Thelma tells Louise “I’m not going back! NO matter what happens.”
- Hal states on another phone call to the women that they’ll never make it to Mexico. They now realize that Hal knows exactly where they’re going. The trap is closing. The Stakes are now higher. This part of Plan B, Escaping to Mexico, is in mortal Jeopardy.
- Realizing again that they have no option, they veer the T-Bird off the Freeway and into the backroads of the local Desert.
- They are now more than best friends. These women are the same Woman. They want and need the same things. Call this a TOTAL INTEGRATION of the hearts, minds and spirits of Thelma and Louise – or is it now a single character: Telouise???
- They both know that they’ve never been more alive as the T-Bird speeds across the Stunning Desert. Here, this Section of the Desert is a TRUE TO LIFE

Character. It represents the personal Desolation both feel knowing that they could be driving into an Ambush. But it also represents the FREEDOM they both feel. See? EVERYTHING written in a screenplay, down to the smallest blade of grass or a butterfly or a leaf, has purpose to it.

- AND THIS IS THE FINAL TURNING POINT: Crossing the desert on the backroads is the last Decision the women will ever make.
- UNTIL THE FINAL DECISION WHICH IS THE CLIMAX AND FINAL DENOUEMENT!

SEQUENCE SEVEN, ACT THREE

Now, we're in our final Act. Here the action keeps rising and intensifies. Dialogue is Minimized.

- As they drive through the desert, the Past comes back to haunt the women. They're hysteria at the Murder they (both) committed turns into mortal fear
- THEN Louise's backstory appears again, at this very, very critical moment. They Eyedropper spurts a HUGE DROP OF REVELATION. LOUISE WAS ABUSED AND RAPED! Which is why she shot and murdered that Terrible Man when he Raped her Best Friend Thelma.
- The Cops close in on the Speeding car. This is EXTERNAL EMOTIONAL STRESS/PRESSURE and the continuation of the Complication of Hal arresting them.
- A cop in his Police Car pulls the two over for speeding. Now, they're back on a wider Road. Thelma points a gun at the Cop's head. Rather than kill him, they lock him in the Police Car's Trunk.
- Louise is now exhausted due to all they've been through. Again showing a sign of weakness, she states a possible course of new action and a Possible Plan: let's turn ourselves into the Police. Thelma rejects the bad idea. She states that killing that Rapist was the only thing to be done.
- Revert to Plan A. Now they're finally having real Fun again!
- Louise phones Hal the Detective. She states that the women won't turn themselves in. But the phone call is long enough that Hal and his team can trace the call and fine the women's location.
- Thelma continues to feel ALIVE again but worries that Louise is going to give up. A REPETITION of Thelma's fear. REPETITION is useful for important details. It reminds us all of what's critical in your story. So repeat that point once, then twice then a 3rd time if you think you need to

WHICH, BY THE WAY, IS CALLED 'THE RULE OF THREE'. If you need to repeat, repeat things three times at various points in your novel or screenplay. But don't make those 'repeats' exactly the same. Vary them a bit – a great deal if you think you need to. And also repeat those three points VISUALLY, sometimes with the Same Visual but often with a bit of variation in the explanation of your brief visual.

- They are still on a Main Road when they see that Truck and the Driver in it who leered at him. Pulling off the road, they flag that Lecher down.
- They shoot the fuel truck and it EXPLODES. The driver is Humiliated because two sexy women beat him to the draw!

- The police find the Police Officer locked in his Trunk and also the burning tanker. They know they're getting close to the women and the Stakes grow much higher.
- The Women pass a Police Car as they drive at speed in the Thunderbird. The Car gives Fast Pursuit.
- (almost Zero Dialogue from this point on. It's all ACTION!)
- More COP CARS IN PURSUIT.
- Louise, still driving, takes evasive action and avoids a group of Cop Cars
- Louise turns off the road and again bounces across the Desert. This time, the Desert isn't a nice character. It's a path and a road to final Destruction for our Heroines.
- Both women know that from here on out, things are going to get very 'shitty'. They know they'll be captured, tried for murder, imprisoned, and executed. So if they're going to avoid painful execution, what option – and final Plan – is available to them?
- Thelma states: "I guess everything we've got to lose is already gone anyway." A summation of their present predicament.
- Even more Cops in pursuit. Now, overhead, are a group of FBI Choppers who pursue them at a speed faster than any car can drive.
- And – WE SEE THE MAGNIFICENT GRAND CANYON which for Thelma & Louise represents a Final Freedom
- Plan B – Escaping to Mexico is now Caput! With Cop Cars and Choppers skidding to a stop behind them, there's no way back only a way forward – into the Grand Canyon.
- Then Thelma says the Final piece of Dialogue, talking for both her and her Best Friend Louise: "Now what?" she states, seeing that the cops have surrounded them. "Let's not get caught.
- Hal tries to save them by walking toward the Thunderbird and speaking to them. This is the PLAN C that never reaches fruition. But here, this One String Character emphasises all of Humanity with sympathy for their plight. He doesn't want to see either of them die.
- The women say goodbye to each other. Louise puts the car in gear and, holding hands, they both drive toward the cliff of the Grand Canyon. The T-Bird sails over the Cliff and down toward oblivion.
- THE END. CREDITS HERE.

SEQUENCE EIGHT, ACT THREE: In this Feature Film, there is no real Sequence 8. Which is highly unusual. Most feature films and Novels have a very short Sequence 8. Some have longer ones. The purpose of Sequence 8 is to Tie-up any loose ends in the story. It's also a place, particularly in comedies, where many characters say goodbye to their readers and Audiences. Often, these real Characters, now the actors still in costume, wave at everyone. They each hold up a sign with their Character and Real Names on them and, then, a Boy Comes out like the Auld Greek Theatre and waves at the Audience. In Greek he'll say:

"Goodbye, everyone. That's the end of this small Guide! Thank you for reading this in English because it is not yet available in Ancient Greek! And now a word from the writer!"

Then this writer, Tom Richards, walks into your minds. He says, "Thanks everyone! And now there's nothing else to do but write the

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Call this small book a way of ‘Paying it both Back and Forward’ which is why this version is FREE. To list everyone who taught me to write would mean I’d have to think back on the hundreds and hundreds of people who commented on my books, novels and screenplays – all versions of them! So in what I hope is some sort of historical order, my grateful thanks goes to:

- Mister Ron Raben – RIP – who was my English and Theatre teacher in Rolling Meadows High School, Rolling Meadows, Illinois. Ron insisted that everyone in his English class keep a real Journal. We had to write that 3 times each week and he’d then comment and each entry and grade it. Between teaching me to write and Act, he was a powerful influence on my desire to become a Full-Time writer – and maybe even a writing jerk! Thank you Ron and to you to Fern!
- Mister Bill Leece – also of the same High School, I never had Bill as a High School English Teacher. But Bill has become a huge influence on my desire to keep writing. His feedback on what I’ve sent to him has been superlative. Thank you BILL!
- Professor John Ficca – was the head of the Theatre Department at Illinois Wesleyan University. I had any number of classes with John and became devoted to the theatre. John insisted that we analyse theatrical plays in great detail and submit many of those for a Final Grade in Theatre. John also directed this writer in a number of Plays including A Midsummer Night’s Dream. THANK YOU JOHN FICCA
- Mister Burda – NOT a full professor at Illinois Wesleyan University, John Burda lectured us in Shakespeare 101 – or, as he himself put it – How to Make the Great Bard Come Alive Again! John’s class was required and one of the most difficult courses I ever had to take. The papers – so many of them! – covered almost all of Shakespeare’s entire Portfolio. Though it was difficult and required a great deal of research, I became compelled to write! THANKS MISTER BURDA!
- The Entire Staff at the Political Science Department, IWU – you all encouraged me to write with the many, many PoliSci Papers I had to write and type. The hardest paper was a study of Western Philosophers including Nietzsche. Oh, did that hurt! Thanks ALL YOU STAFF!
- Harvey Beutner and the Staff of the IWU Argus – I became editor in Chief of this campus newspaper. Constant deadlines meant that I had to write every day and to many rules that Harvey and Anne Orth, assistant editor, taught to me. Thanks too to the staff of the Bloomington Printing Company who printed The Argus every single week. You gave me a Lead Shot that I have somewhere or other. It says, upside down and backwards: Tom Richards, IWU Argus. I’ll find that soon! And Anne Orth, if you someday read this, I still have that Book that you gave to me right before our graduation in 1978. THANK YOU ALL.
- Liam O’Neill – my best friend and man, do I miss you and always will. You were – and still are – my producer. You encouraged me to write and to finish what I started. Here’s to you, my Great Long-distance Friend. Tom xxx
- Carmel ‘Pookey’ Murray – my loving lifelong Partner, best friend and Muse – you read everything that I wrote while you and I lived together at our home in Eyerics, County Meath. Bless you and keep you safe. And may you always remember me

and the love I have for you. The End my Pook? No! 'Tis only the Beginning!
Xoxoxox

Writ and finished this day, 15 October 2024
Eyeries Village, County Cork, Ireland
By this Unknown Author who will soon live in
A new Home this time Alone!
On somewhere and someplace called Golf Road
Crystal Lake, Illinois, United States of America

Bless all of you who read this. This small token of my unspoken admiration and gratitude is the final book, novel or screenplay that Tom shall write for some time. But I'll be back someday. The question is not where? The question is WHEN!

Or is it! Xxx THE BEGINNING AND NEVER, EVER AN END. AND THAT'S A
PROMISE MADE BY TOM

APPENDIX

1. Sample Treatment

Sample Movie Treatment - Example Story Synopsis For A Film Script

By [Marilyn Horowitz](#)

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Lilly

It's 2006. The political climate in China is very unstable. When ANNA, the young pregnant wife of an outspoken journalist is left widowed after a vicious assassination, friends whisk her out of the country to sympathetic expatriates in Queens, New York.

In Queens she's given a grim room in the local syndicate head quarters. Anna is lethargic, lost in pain. JON VAN, the charming head of the syndicate comes to see how she's doing, and expresses romantic interest in her. Anna's lack of enthusiasm angers him, but he writes it off to her recent experiences.

Lost in shock and grief, Anna, is placed with JUNE, another widow, who has adjusted to the new life. They share a run-down apartment in a maze of tenement buildings, serviced by a few small markets in a bad part of town. June runs the local daycare center for the working mothers in this closed Vietnamese community.

Anna, now seven months pregnant, is speechless and depressed until early labor forces a bone-chilling howl of pain from her parched lips. The baby is born, Lily, a perfect little girl, but Anna is too deeply distressed to bond.

It's June who holds the tiny girl, and cuddles her.

As the weeks pass, Anna slowly recovers. She starts to ask questions about the new world she's entered. Anna sees the mothers drop off and pick up their children, tension and fear in their faces. When Anna asks why there is so much stress, June explains that everyone owes the syndicate, the local arm of the people who helped Anna escape. Jon Van is the boss.

June reveals her hatred of the syndicate, telling Anna of their exploitation of their own kind. "That's why I make so little money, Anna, half of it goes back to them. That's why everyone's afraid, they use threats of deportation or death to keep us in line." Anna denies this, insisting that since the syndicate saved her life and the life of her daughter, June must be exaggerating.

June helps Anna improve her English, warning her to keep it a secret. Their nightly practice bonds them together like sisters. But as time passes, June becomes more and more depressed and decides to run away. Anna feels for June, but warns her that it's wrong to flee. Late one night, June tries to escape. She's caught and is beaten to death.

Horrified at the death of her only friend, Anna's emotional agony returns and she takes refuge in her relationship with Lily. When Lily wants to know about her father, Anna makes up a wild story. She tells Lily her daddy was a famous patriot, who died to save her and many others from the oppression in their country. When Lily asks if he's really dead, Anna hasn't the heart to confirm the truth. She pretends that there's a big secret. She tells Lily that Daddy really escaped and came to America, where he is searching for them everywhere.

This fantasy helps Anna to resolve her trauma over the death of her beloved husband and she begins to mend. Jon Van visits, and puts her to work. She takes over June's former duties and runs the local daycare centre.

Jon Van lays down the rules: traditional food, dress and language. No English in the home, no western clothes, no contact with TV. Jon Van makes his usual pass, but Anna only looks at him with scorn.

Five years later.

Anna's daughter, Lily, is ready to go to school. On her first day, she's made fun of and returns home in tears. She begs her mother to teach her English and buy her regular American clothes. Lily's daily humiliation at school upsets Anna. She goes to Jon Van and asks that her daughter be allowed to wear American clothes and learn English.

Jon Van warns her to stop this revolt, reminding her of her illegal status. When she argues, he reminds her about what happened to June. He then offers to help Lily if Anna will respond to his advances.

Defeated and repelled, Anna returns home, realizing that June had told her the truth. The months pass, and Lily continues to attend school. Every day, she comes home crying. Lily becomes a faint shadow of her former cheerful self.

Anna can only attempt to comfort her. The only cure is a new story about Dad. Anna's helplessness turns to anger and depression, and she neglects her work and this causes her to lose her day care centre.

Jon Van appears with his usual request, but Anna resists. She pleads with him to give her more time to respond to him, and to give her a job.

Meanwhile, after a rash of local thefts, the regular collector, another woman, is attacked and robbed.

Jon Van asks Anna to collect the deposits from the local stores and put them in the bank. She does this gratefully, and without question.

After a few months of doing this work, it's Lily's birthday. Anna steals the daily deposit and buys Lily American clothes and a gold necklace.

Meanwhile the thefts continue throughout the neighborhood.

When Jon Van confronts Anna about the missing money, she pretends the thief has attacked her.

Jon Van believes her, offers her safety in exchange for sexual favors. Again, Anna rebuffs him. She realizes that Jon Van was hoping this would happen, and it makes her even more determined not to give in to him.

DANIEL, the thief, burgles one more store, and is caught by the enforcers of the syndicate. They drag him to an alley and try to beat him to death. Ankle broken, severely wounded, he manages to escape into the maze of tenements.

Daniel breaks into Anna's apartment and hides. Anna is out collecting, and Lily is in school. He finds the necklace and pockets it.

Lily returns from school. She finds Daniel, and assumes he's her long lost father, just returned from a new adventure. Daniel's touched by her innocent acceptance and cannot hurt her. Anna returns. She's appalled to find Daniel in her house, alone with her daughter. She's about to turn him into the syndicate, when Lily joyously announces how happy she is to have found her father at last.

He's so badly beaten that he's not even a threat, and so, Anna doesn't have the heart to destroy Lily's joy. They have a little party, and Daniel and Anna pretend that the necklace is from her "father."

Anna is overwhelmed to see her little girl finally happy.

They continue to enact this uncomfortable charade until Lily leaves for school the next day. Finally alone with him, Anna tells Daniel to get out. He refuses. She threatens to call the syndicate. He threatens to tell Lily he's not her father. Anna realizes that she will be accused of harboring a suspect. She asks Daniel what he wants. Daniel tells her that all he wants is a chance to recover and the get the hell away from there. Anna says she will let him stay if he will maintain the lie. Daniel agrees.

That night the charade continues. Daniel teaches Lily some cool English words and how to fight back. There is as much tenderness between them as though he were her real father. Anna is upset at the situation, but Lily goes to sleep, happy in the lie.

As the days pass, Lily and Daniel grow closer and closer. Lily changes and becomes more secure and outgoing.

After Lily leaves for school, Anna and Daniel talk. As the time passes, the conversation becomes more personal. Anna realizes they have a lot in common. She softens and takes care of him.

Daniel wants to know who beat him so badly. Anna tells him about the syndicate. Anna goes to the stores to collect the deposits. Friends warn her that the syndicate has found out that she bought the necklace.

She runs home and asks Daniel for help. He sees the poverty she lives in and demands to know where she got the money for Lily's gift. She tells him, commenting that they're both thieves.

Daniel realizes the danger Anna has placed Lily in, and tells her they must get Lily from school. They arrive in time to see Lily kidnapped on the way home by the syndicate. They pursue, but cannot follow inside the syndicate headquarters.

Daniel takes Anna to stay with his friends. He agrees to help her find Lily. They decide to turn the tables on the syndicate and break them up. The question is how? He and his friends are former soldiers, now fallen on hard times. They plan an elaborate scheme to break in and rescue Lily.

Anna must go in to the headquarters alone and face Jon Van. She pretends to be ready to give in to his advances in exchange for Lily, and they go to bed.

Daniel breaks in with his team. A firefight ensues.

Daniel rescues Lily, but is shot down. As he dies, he tells Anna he was happy his life added up to something after all.

Now Anna must save her own daughter, and kill Jon Van.

She meets the challenge, leaving the syndicate shattered behind her.

With new resolve and confidence, Anna takes over the syndicate, but brings prosperity and a new modern tradition into the community. She never tells Lily that Daniel, the thief, wasn't her father.

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2. Thelma and Louis Theatrical Screenplay Breakdown

What makes this world not worth living in?

1. Thelma – lousy marriage. Trapped. Never led her own life – a teenager. Thelma never has any fun! That’s her initial want and why Plan A and leaving on the first trip.
2. After Harlan’s murder – Thelma phones home. Darryl is not there. So no help from him.
3. Louise – dead-end job. In a lousy relationship with Jimmy. She wants marriage but knows it wouldn’t work
4. They shoot Harlan – no going back. Louise can’t go back.
5. Thelma’s armed robbery – Thelma can’t go back either

Thelma and Louise by Callie Khouri

Structure and Notes

Act I Sequence One

(What makes this world not worth living in)

Louise – working in a dead-end job:

Thelma – in a dead end marriage. She’s held captive by Darryl.

Act I Plan A (Let’s Have Fun) – they’re going to escape together (and Thelma isn’t about to tell Darryl) – and to the Mountains to have some fun.

- Introduce Thelma & Louise. Louise in a dead-end job. Thelma trying to make a good life (hence the wallpaper) but living in a ‘shell’. Married to Darryl who is a control freak and prison officer. Controlling. And Thelma is trapped by that control – seeks permission to run her own life.
 - Louise – the loose cannon. Angry. Defiant. Everything that Thelma wants to be.
 - Thelma – subservient. ‘Powerless’ – little respect for self.
 - Emotion: Thelma is afraid. Avoids confrontation. Naive about Darryl.
- Packing for Escape – Thelma overpacks. Louise is in control and packs neatly (everything in its place.) Advertise ‘Jimmy’ – photograph (reveals much about both characters). Plant Thelma’s gun. Garage: plant ‘murder’ by a psycho. Reinforce Thelma’s quirky fear. They pull away in Louise’s T-Bird. Thelma howls revelling in the freedom.
- On the road – give gun to Louise, Louise shocked that Thelma brought it. Thelma naive. Thelma reinforces being trapped: “I’ve never got out of town without Darryl.” And Darryl’s violence Louise: Ah shit, Thelma, he’s going to kill you. (Thelma reverts to a teenager – she has never known what it is to lead her own life)
- Incipient Incident: Thelma gets hungry, wants to stop. An hour left to drive.

Act I Sequence Two (everything leads to failure of Plan A and the point of no return)

- They pull in to the Silver Bullet
- Thelma gets a drink. Wanting to break free. “Let my hair down.” Louise shocked: used to seeing her sedate. Louise orders a drink too.
- Introduce Harlan – usual pick-up lines. Tension. Thelma being naive. Louise knowing what Harlan wants.
- Harlan tells Thelma they need to dance before the girls leave.
- Jimmy backstory – he hasn’t called. Louise also in a lousy relationship. But maybe there’s hope for Louise.

- Later – Thelma has been dancing with Harlan, drinking too much. Goes outside with Harlan and is sick in the parking lot. (Louise has gone to the bathroom).
- Harlan behaves like a prick as he tries to rape Thelma. She hits him: he hits her back. He is inches away from raping her.
- Louise walks up. Puts her gun to Harlan. He lets go of Thelma. (Harlan: We were just having a little fun. Louise: you've got a real fucked up idea of fun (On the head for Plan A – let's have fun.
- Harlan to Louise (pushing her one step too far): Bitch, I should have fucked her. L: what did you say? H: I said suck my cock.
- And Louise shoots Harlan, killing him.

End Act I – Plan A failed. They did NOT have fun.

Act II – Sequence Three – the dramatic question: what are they going to do? Will they be able to escape?

Interim Plan: Get money?

- They flee in the T-Bird. Get onto the Interstate. Louise still has the gun.
 - Thelma is terrified. Louise is controlled. Thinks trying to come up with a plan.
 - Thelma wants to go to the cops. Louise knows it's impossible. Thelma would be perceived as 'asking for it' from Harlan.
- Thelma's Plan isn't possible and (Reinforces 'No Going Back')**
- Stop the car – Louise gets sick
(Louise knows that they have crossed into a new world. She also knows she has to 'drag' the indecisive, immature Thelma with her)
 - Go to a truck stop at 4AM. Louise orders Thelma to be inconspicuous
 - Coffee shop – Louise must come up with a plan. Tension between them: Thelma is blamed for the whole thing because of her behaviour with Harlan. Thelma gets up to go to the bathroom: coffee cup crashes to the ground. Attracting attention.
 - Silver Bullet Bar Parking Lot at 4AM – meet **HAL** the detective. He interviews waitress LENA: no way those two girls did it. Harlan was probably killed by some gal's husband. (he was asking for it). Lena: Those girls are not the murdering type. (Hal sent off the scent).
- Hal has a single plan at this point – to find who did it**
- Coffee shop – Thelma rings home and Darryl. But the house is empty: Darryl never came home (so no help from him. Another reason Thelma can't go home)
- (NO external help. Thelma and Louise are on their own)**
- Louise tries to phone (Jimmy). No answer. Reinforces above.
 - They are not talking to each other. (And we know they must pull together if they're going to survive).
 - Dawn – they hurtle down the highway. Louise knows they need money (one of the Plans?) They're cash poor. Thelma loses some cash. We know she's not good with money. Louise needs to rest. They'll go to a hotel.
 - Hotel: Louise still searches for a plan. She needs Thelma's help to do that. Thelma came up with the idea to go to the cops but Louise rejected that Plan. Thelma can't help. Louise knows she's on her own to come up with a plan.
 - Police Garage – they dust Harlan's car for prints. Hal notices a weird drop of blood
 - Hotel: Thelma at the pool trying to forget the murder, denying it. Louise phones Jimmy. We see how upset Louise is as she asks for help. We learn also that Darryl is

going to kill Thelma and Louise when they get home. Jimmy agrees to wire 6700 bucks to Western Union in OK City. Louise agrees to call him back. He loves her. Louise gets Thelma and they take off.

(So they can get some help. We know that for now they're not alone)

- Police Station: Hal with his boss put out an APB. And want to involve the FBI. Not sure that T & L did it. But Lena saw the green T-Bird so they want to find it. Maybe the girls witnessed the murder.
Hal's plan now incorporates: find Thelma and Louise
- On the road. Plan B is from Louise: "I'm going to Mexico." Louise: Are you up to this? T: is rattled. L: don't you fall apart on me. Every time we get in trouble you go blank or plead insanity or some shit.
(Plan B voiced: they're going to Mexico. Will Thelma go with her?)
- Police station: Hall has created identi-kit drawings of Thelma and Louise.

Act II Sequence Four (I think) – actioning the Money Plan

- Girls stop at a Country Store. Louise uses the Pay phone to ring Jimmy. Jimmy gives Louise the Western Union address. Meanwhile, Thelma is buying Wild Turkey (Thelma simply is not 'there' and can't deal with this. The weaker link)
- Louise orders Thelma to call Darryl (to make things seem 'normal'.) Darryl orders Thelma home but we know he doesn't give a shit about her. And Thelma finally tells Darryl "Go fuck yourself"
We see some backbone in her. She's been pushed too far too
- Thelma bumps into the Hitchhiker who asks her for a lift
Added complication – introduce Hitchhiker
- Louise won't give the guy a lift though Thelma wants to. L asks Thelma how the talk with Darryl went. Thelma asks: "How long before we're in Mexico?"
(We know that Thelma is coming with her)
- Hal is looking at registration info for Green T-Birds. Sees Louise's name but it means nothing to him.
- On the road: Thelma wanted to pick up the Hitchhiker. Louise wants Thelma to use the map to find a way to Mexico but NOT thru Texas (TX is the obvious and quickest choice).
Plan B to get to Mexico is complicated because Louise does not want to go thru TX. Why? Because TX scares Louise silly – and we don't really know why
- Hitchhiker drives past on a bike. He's going in their direction
- Hal finds Louise's apartment. It's empty. Picture of Jimmy. Hal talks to an Old couple.
- T & L pick up the Hitchhiker (complicates Plan B)
- Hal goes to Louise's restaurant, interviewing staff.
- Intercut T&H in car with H'hiker as: Hal pulls up at Thelma's house. Interviews Darryl. What!?
- In car on the road: they talk about Darryl and Thelma and the lousy marriage. HHiker spots a cop car. Louise avoids it. HHiker (JD) realizes something might be up. But no one is saying. Louise: we'll drop you in OK city but you'd best then be on your way. (possible end of complication)
- Hal at Thelma's House – prints on the trunk of Harlan's car match Thelma's. Talks with FBI guy. Hal's learned that Thelma had her 38 gun with her. And they're all now looking for her.
- Car stops at the Western Union (a hotel). Louise realizes money isn't there. But JIMMY is there and gives her the money. They take a hotel room.

- JD takes off down the road. Thelma surprised when Louise and Jimmy catch her close to JD before he goes. They take a room. JD blows Thelma a kiss
- In hotel, Louise reveals that she isn't going to tell Jimmy where they're going; doesn't want to make him an accomplice. She leaves Thelma alone in their hotel room.
- JD shows up at Thelma's hotel room.
(Note: JD the hitchhiker is 'free' – he's freely hitching on the road).
- In Jimmy's motel room, he wants to know what's bothering Louise. She won't tell him. He gives her an engagement ring. Louise really cares for him. He's worried she's going to permanently split. She knows that a marriage wouldn't work.
midpoint: Louise gets what she wants, but can't have it.
- In Thelma's room, JD takes off her wedding ring. Freeing her.
midpoint: Thelma gets what she wants – freedom
Midpoint above

Act II Sequence Five

- Thelma's room: we learn that JD is a robber. He tells her how he robs a store (pay off below) They make love (Thelma is fulfilled by the prospect of a 'fulfilling relationship' if only in the now.
- Next morning Coffee Shop: Jimmy wants to go with Louise, but Louise knows it's impossible. She gives him back the ring. Jimmy leaves in a taxi.
- Thelma is in her room, in bed with JD - aftermath
- Hal at home with wife: trying to figure out if it's conceivable that Thelma & Louise could shoot someone, if anyone could – like his wife. He's gotta go to Little Rock (Arkansas – he's getting closer)
- Coffee Shop – Thelma comes in wonderfully happy. Louise: where's the money? And Thelma left it in the room with JD (and THAT is the complication)
- Outside their room: the money is GONE. The MONEY PLAN failed. Louise is distraught. And Thelma – she now takes action
Money Plan fails.
- Thelma and Louise take off and leave the hotel
- Hal and FBI tap Thelma's home phones. Darryl is there.
Plan: Robbery (plans become more desperate)
- Convenience Store – The girls count all their money – 88 bucks and not enough. Thelma goes into the convenience store.
- Louise is floored as she realizes Thelma has robbed the store. Thelma: we needed it. Now drive us to Mexico
(So Plan Robbery a consequence of failure of Money Plan, allowing them to get back to Plan B – get us to Mexico)
- Hal, FBI and Darryl watch VCR tape of Thelma robbing the store, mimicking JD's technique.

End Sequence Five

Start Sequence Six

- At his apartment, 2 plainclothes policemen pick up Jimmy
- Cops stop JD. He reaches for wallet – which is loaded with Louise's money – to show them ID
- The girls in a car – now fleeing fast, travelling at speed. And Thelma is now the one in control, the one who is thinking.

- Jimmy interviewed by Hal. Jimmy knows nothing. But tells them to find that kid (JD)
- Girls pass truck and truck driver who sticks out his tongue. More male harassment (an echo of what happened before to both of them)
- Hal tells Jimmy the cops picked up JD. He was found with cash on him. Jimmy wants to know: how much cash?
- Girls in car: they review the possibility of going back to the police; turning themselves in. But Louise knows it's no use.
(And Louise seems to know a whole lot about the law... What is her backstory hiding?)
- Hal interviews JD. The girls would not have robbed the store if JD hadn't stolen their money. Hal pressures JD for more info. After the pressure JD caves in
(And this reinforces the complication caused by JD)
- JD is led away – and confronts Darryl – I like your wife! JD is complex. He's the guy who gave Thelma 'freedom' but also took away their freedom by stealing the cash.
- Thelma calls Darryl. His reaction is: the cops know all about this.
Raises the stakes even further – they're onto the girls
- Louise talks to Hal as part of this phone call. Hal offers to help. But warns her: They're not going to make it to Mexico. They know that's where they're going. The trap is closing. Even higher stakes.
- Still in the car. **Plan B going to Mexico is in Jeopardy.** And Thelma asks what they do now? Louise doesn't know. Maybe they can turn themselves in. And Thelma: "I'm not going back. No matter what happens.
(Thelma now can't go back either because she has robbed.)
- And still in the car: that decision not to go back is reinforced: Louise talks about her fear of getting old alone. Thelma talks about her fear of getting old with Darryl.
- The drive thru the desert – geographically fitting. Getting even more remote from their old lives. And they connect. In spite of their flight. They're also alive – more alive now perhaps than they've ever been. And alive with each other. (Thelma always wanted to travel – L: you are now... As they speed thru a beautiful desert)

Act II End Sequence Six

Act II Sequence Seven?

- Driving thru the desert – Thelma reflects on the murder. Emotions filled with hysteria turning to mortal fear.
- And Louise's backstory – Thelma realizes: "It happened to you, didn't it?" Big revelation.
- Desert driving – cop car on their tail for speeding. They're pulled over. **(stakes increase. Additional external pressure – making it to Mexico seems more remote)**
- Thelma puts gun to cop's head. Thelma orders Louise to shoot the radio. Thelma ACTIVE **(Thelma takes action – her arc now complete)**. They now have the cop's gun.
- Thelma's house – Hal and FBI wait for call. Hal gets a folder on Louise – with a rape report.
- Still driving – Louise exhausted. L: why don't we go to the police? Reversal of what she originally said about Thelma's first Plan. Thelma rejects it. And Thelma realizes that the only thing to have been done was killing Harlan because he was hurting her

and life would have been a whole lot worse if he hadn't been killed. And she's having fun.

- Louise phones Hal. She won't come in. But is on the phone long enough for Hal to get a fix on them. It's Thelma who hangs up.
- Thelma worries Louise is going to give up. And T says it on the head: "Something in me can't go back. I just couldn't live." We understand why she can't go back – and she says it. Early.
- Still driving – and Thelma feels more alive than she ever has before.
- They flag down the raunchy trucker in his truck.
- They shoot the tanker blowing it up. Humiliating the asshole driver.
- Cop in trunk is found. The burning tanker is found.
- Hal and Max (FBI) are in a jet flying toward the girls. They learn about the cop, tanker, the gun...
- Thelma and Louise drive on. So different. Running but faces filled with serenity.
- Girls pass a police car. It begins to pursue. Cop calls for backup
- Streams of cop cars pull out of a station.
- Pursing cop cars almost get them. Louise avoids them. They continue pursuit.
- Louise has to drive across the desert to avoid capture. 15 cars in pursuit.
- The girls realize that from here on out things are going to be really shitty (meaning they'll be captured, prison, etc etc etc). T: **"I guess everything we've got to lose is already gone anyway."** (DS and Dawn – for Thelma it's all gone. For Dawn, it's all gone too – but reversed. It was all gone yet now if I do something I'll have it all back again.)
- More cops. And now FBI chopper. Pressure increasing. Looking grim.
- And now the Grand Canyon. **Plan to get to Mexico caput.** Absolutely no escape
- Hal and Max arrive by chopper. Thelma and Louise are surrounded by cop cars. And it's Thelma who says: "Now what?" then "Let's not get caught. Go." **So we see the decision and also know why.**
- Hal tries to save them approaching their car. **FINAL PLAN C**
- The girls say goodbye to each other. And Louise puts the car in gear and floors it. The T-Bird sails over the edge of the cliff.

END

