

Welcome to

Write Way Better Scenes



pagesandplatforms.com/romance



With



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Do you have a
manuscript?



Do you feel like something isn't *quite*
working...



Do you feel like something isn't *quite*
working...

but you aren't
sure what?



Have you gotten
feedback like...



- “I can’t tell what’s going on.”



- “I can’t tell what’s going on.”
- “I don’t get why your character is doing that.”



- “I can’t tell what’s going on.”
- “I don’t get why your character is doing that.”
- “You lost me here. I got bored.”



- “I can’t tell what’s going on.”
- “I don’t get why your character is doing that.”
- “You lost me here. I got bored.”
- “What does this have to do with your story?”



- “I can’t tell what’s going on.”
- “I don’t get why your character is doing that.”
- “You lost me here. I got bored.”
- “What does this have to do with your story?”
- “Something just isn’t working for me.”



You're in the
right place.



The scene is
the basic
building
block of
story.




Writing better
scenes means
writing better
stories.





What is a
scene?





Seven
elements of a
working
scene.





Analyzing
working
scenes.



A caveat...





Tools





Tools,
not
rules.



What is a scene?



Definition of a Scene:

A story segment where *something happens*



Definition of a Scene:

A story segment where *something happens* that *changes* the character from one state to another.



Is a scene a
chapter?



ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

N^o. 1.]

SATURDAY, APRIL 30, 1859.

[PRICE 2d.

A TALE OF TWO CITIES.

In Three Books.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

BOOK THE FIRST. RECALLED TO LIFE.

CHAPTER I. THE PERIOD.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief,

The chapter is a print publishing convention.

entertained himself beside, with such humane
achievements as to be long a youth to have his
hands cut off, his tongue torn out with pincers,
and his body burnt alive. He had not
kneeled down in the rain to do honour to a dirty
procession of monks which passed within his
view, at a distance of some fifty or sixty yards.
It is likely enough that, rooted in the woods of
France and Norway, there were growing trees,
when that sufferer was put to death, already marked
by the Woodman, Fate, to come down and be



The scene is
inherent in story
structure
regardless of
medium.



A scene can
break across
chapters.



On there's nothing more to see here," said my companion as the hubbub
hem boys down there won't be the only ones feeling a stick to their backs,
back to Mr Chatley's and finish up my hemming!"

was a tailor's apprentice. I was so anxious then to set myself apart from
m—that when he said, "What about you? This mistress of yours likely to
ou don't come the moment she calls?" what came into my mind to reply
does not call for me. She rings."

aid he, flaring his nostrils out and primming his mouth up. "Well then
on back to her breakfast parlour and her fine crockery then, hadn't you?"
his hat back on and stalked away.

back to the Keppel's Head in a right ill humour, angry at the rough and
outside.



I came in with her tea tray a little while later, Lady Emilia was alone and
the window. "I do love the Navy," she said.
my lady." For once, I had no one else to answer to, and was in no great
m to my next task.

I will be an admiral one day. Takes after my own father."
I might myself very wise after a year in her service, and reckoned that she used
to be a friend, so I ventured to ask, "Was he an admiral, your father?"

Admiral of Great Britain. A fine man. I have seen no evidence of his spirit
in any of my disappointing nephews, nor in any of their sons, either, except
Why else would I make this tedious journey and put up at this horrid hotel
at review?"

A chapter
can contain
more than
one scene.



The seven
elements of a
working scene.



Seven Essential Elements:



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Complications → Turning point



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Complications → Turning point
3. Crisis



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Complications → Turning point
3. Crisis
4. Climax



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Complications → Turning point
3. Crisis
4. Climax
5. Resolution



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Complications → Turning point
3. Crisis
4. Climax
5. Resolution
6. Story Event



Seven Essential Elements:

1. Inciting Incident
2. Complications → Turning point
3. Crisis
4. Climax
5. Resolution
6. Story Event
7. Character Change



1. Inciting Incident:



1. Inciting Incident:

- An event that disturbs the character's status quo.



1. Inciting Incident:

- An event that disturbs the character's status quo.
- Sets them in motion towards a new goal.



1. Inciting Incident:

- An event that disturbs the character's status quo.
- Sets them in motion towards a new goal.
- **Intentional** (actions or words of another character) or **coincidental** (happenstance, act of nature).



2. Complications → Turning Point:



2. Complications → Turning Point:

- One or more obstacles or opportunities between the character and the goal.



2. Complications → Turning Point:

- One or more obstacles or opportunities between the character and the goal.
- Final complication forces the character to confront a hard choice and change direction (turn).



3. Crisis:



3. Crisis:

- The choice the character has to make.



3. Crisis:

- The choice the character has to make.
- Options must be consequential and equally weighted.



3. Crisis:

- The choice the character has to make.
- Options must be consequential and equally weighted.
- Can be stated as an either/or question.



3. Crisis:

- The choice the character has to make.
- Options must be consequential and equally weighted.
- Can be stated as an either/or question.
- Often in subtext, not on the page.



4. Climax:



4. Climax:

- The answer to the Crisis question.



4. Climax:

- The answer to the Crisis question.
- The choice the character makes between the conflicting options.



4. Climax:

- The answer to the Crisis question.
- The choice the character makes between the conflicting options.
- Shown by character's actions or words.



5. Resolution:



5. Resolution:

- The action that proceeds from the climax decision.



5. Resolution:

- The action that proceeds from the climax decision.
- Leads into the next scene.



5. Resolution:

- The action that proceeds from the climax decision.
- Leads into the next scene.
- May be brief or implied, or may be a longish coda or “sequel” to the scene.



6. Story Event:



6. Story Event:

- Something has to *happen*.



6. Story Event:

- Something has to *happen*.
- Can be stated with active verbs.



6. Story Event:

- Something has to *happen*.
- Can be stated with active verbs.
- Happens *to* or is caused *by* the scene's central character.



7. Character Change:



7. Character Change:

- A detectable shift in the character's state.



7. Character Change:

- A detectable shift in the character's state.
- On a shared continuum.



7. Character Change:

- A detectable shift in the character's state.
- On a shared continuum.
- Meaningful and relevant to the overall story.



7. Character Change:

- A detectable shift in the character's state.
- On a shared continuum.
- Meaningful and relevant to the overall story.
- Caused by the crisis choice.



Analyzing
working scenes.



Let's start with a story.



The Red Bra



The Red Bra











WARNING
DO NOT OPEN DOOR WHEN
TUMBLING
SEE IN THE WINDOW
PART IS ON

UNLOADED

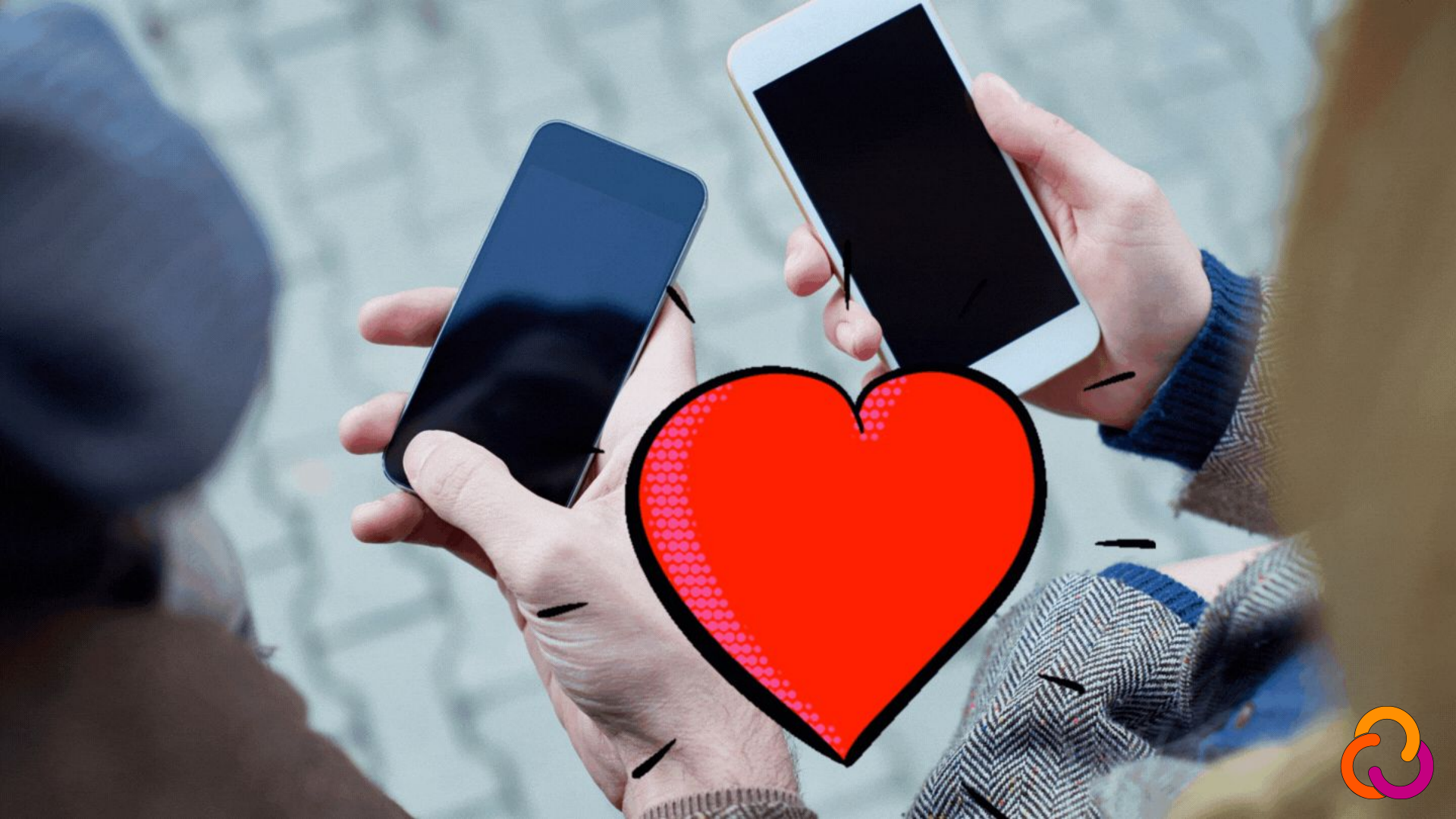
IF AN INTERRUPTION
OCCURS, WAIT SEVERAL
MINUTES BEFORE
OPENING DOOR.











Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

Story event:



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

Story event:

- Protagonist *meets* a handsome man at the laundromat and *makes a connection*.



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

Story event:

- Protagonist *meets* a handsome man at the laundromat and *makes a connection*.

Character change:



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

Story event:

- Protagonist *meets* a handsome man at the laundromat and *makes a connection*.

Character change:

- Lonely → Connected



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

Story event:

- Protagonist *meets* a handsome man at the laundromat and *makes a connection*.

Character change:

- Lonely → Connected
- Desperate → Hopeful



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

1. Inciting Incident?



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

1. Inciting Incident?
 - Tall-Dark-and-Handsome walks in with a single load of laundry (sets the clock).



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

1. Inciting Incident?
 - Tall-Dark-and-Handsome walks in with a single load of laundry (sets the clock).
 - Coincidental.



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

2. Complications → Turning Point?



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

2. Complications:
 - He seems to be ignoring her.



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

2. Complications:
 - He seems to be ignoring her.
 - She catches him watching her through the reflection of the dryer window.



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

2. →Turning Point?

- He seems to be ignoring her.
- She catches him watching her through the reflection of the dryer window



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

2. →Turning Point:

- He seems to be ignoring her.
- She catches him watching her through the reflection of the dryer window.

→ Maintenance man intervenes; Handsome walks away.



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

3. Crisis?



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

3. Crisis?

Talk to Handsome and try to connect at the risk of vulnerability and rejection?

OR Mind her own business and stay safe from rejection but lose a chance at love?



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

4. Climax?



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

4. Climax?

She sidles up to him and offers laundry help.



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

5. Resolution?



Scene Analysis:

The Red Bra

5. Resolution?

He asks for her name and number.

Implication: he's interested and they'll meet again.



Whew!



Let's try your new skills
on a written scene.







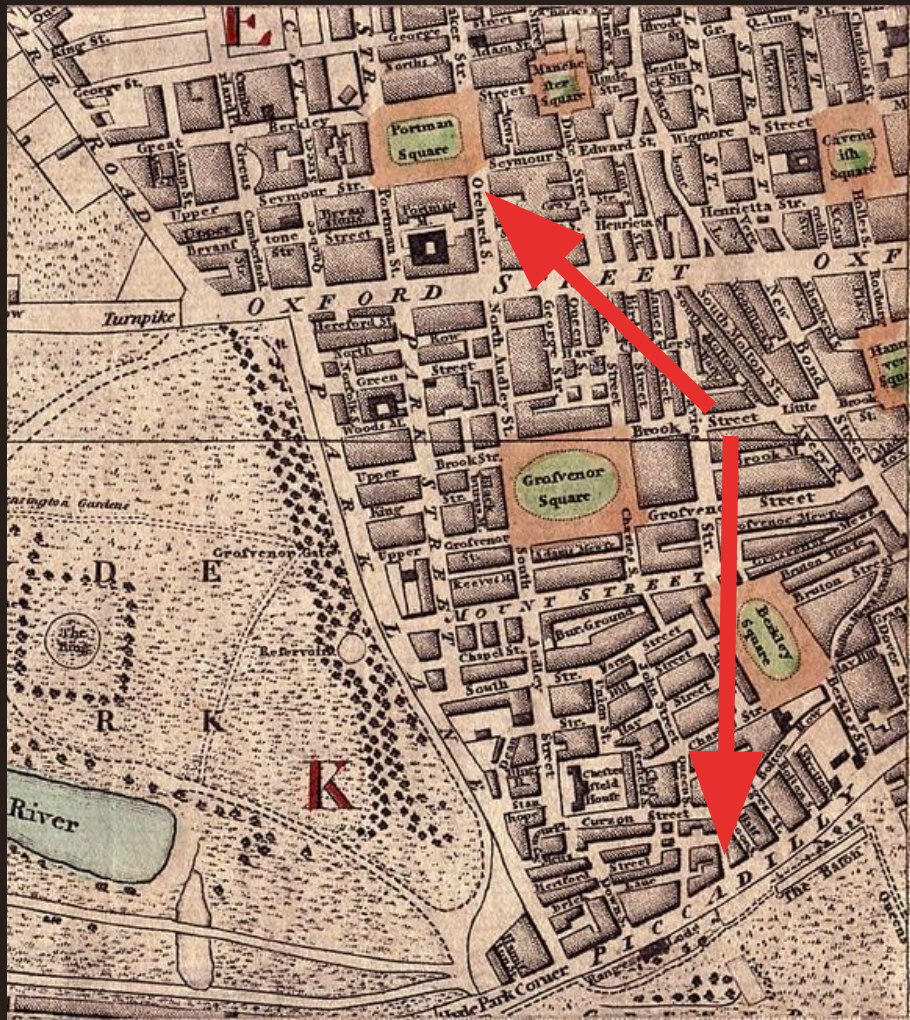
“I don’t allow fighting in this establishment, nor in the street outside it. They have gone, and now you’ll be gone too, and not welcome back.”





Penrith blew out a pent-up breath. “The rats have scattered,” he said. He shook out his hand, flexed his fingers, and grinned at John. “Just as well. I nearly cracked my knuckles against that Townsend fellow’s bone-box. Come! Let’s go home.”





It was an odd thing to say, for their respective residences lay in opposite directions, but he strode off towards Half Moon Street without a backward glance, and as John had no wish to encounter Townsend and his cronies alone, he followed.





The brawl, and Townsend's words, repeated themselves endlessly in John's mind as they walked. Penrith relived the occasion aloud, point for point, laughingly approving of John's clever insult and praising the bloody effect of the one punch he had gotten in.





His words battered at John, augmenting an already unbearable sense of shame. By the time they reached Half Moon Street, John was on the point of begging him to shut up, and only refrained from doing so because Penrith fairly dragged him up to the library and handed him a large glass of cognac. John swallowed a great deal of it in one fiery gulp and felt his nerves begin to unwind.



“Let me have a look at that,” Penrith said. His movements were full of intent as he set his own glass down and moved in to inspect John’s tender, swollen cheek. He shook his head, and in a low, intimate voice said, “That’s going to mar your beauty for a few days.”



His hand was on John's face, holding it steady in the light from the window. There could be nothing more to see than a bruise, but Penrith did not release him. John forced himself to remain still, cutting his eyes away, but his heart was racing uncomfortably. Penrith's other hand came up and turned his face forward, and when he leaned in closer, John could no longer pretend to misunderstand his intent.





He jumped back. “What are you doing, Penrith?” he cried. It was all he could think to say.

Penrith gave an annoyed sigh, took up his glass again and drained it in a swallow, then almost slammed it back down on the table. John felt an irrational urge to apologise, but he could only stand staring, trying to catch his breath, wildly protesting to himself that he was not...he did not want...there was nothing to...





Penrith's jaw worked. He made a visible effort to smooth his features, and said tightly, "I beg your pardon, Waterfield. I gave you my word that I would not importune you. I have let the excitement of the day go to my head. A good fight always makes me— well..."

He flushed and looked away. "If I have misjudged the situation, I am sorry. It will not happen again."



John was seething with emotions he could neither name nor express. Penrith had indeed broken his promise, but he had not misjudged the situation. John knew it, and Penrith certainly knew it too. A show of indignation would be false. There was really nothing to say.



“I should go.”

Penrith gave a curt nod,
punctiliously opened the library
door for him, and allowed him to
make his escape.



Scene Analysis:

Restraint



Scene Analysis: *Restraint*

Story event: What happened?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

Story event: What happened?

- John *walks home* with Penrith, who *tries to kiss* him.



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

Story event: What happened?

- John *walks home* with Penrith, who *tries to kiss* him.

How did that change John?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

Story event: What happened?

- John *walks home* with Penrith, who *tries to kiss* him.

How did that change John?

- In denial → No longer able to deny his feelings.



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

Story event: What happened?

- John *walks home* with Penrith, who *tries to kiss* him.

How did that change John?

- In denial → No longer able to deny his feelings.
- Troubled → Deeply troubled (freaking out)



Scene Analysis: *Restraint*

1. Inciting Incident?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

1. Inciting Incident?
 - Penrith says “Let’s go home.”



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

1. Inciting Incident?

- Penrith says “Let’s go home.”
- Intentional (caused by character action).



Scene Analysis: *Restraint*

2. Complications → Turning Point?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

2. Complications:
 - Penrith ignores John's state of mind.



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

2. →Turning Point?

- Penrith ignores John's state of mind.



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

2. →Turning Point:

- Penrith ignores John's state of mind.

→ He leans in for the kiss that John isn't prepared for.



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

3. Crisis?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

3. Crisis?

Admit his feelings and succumb to the kiss,
but lose the last possibility of denial?

OR Hold onto his denial a little longer, but
annoy Penrith and damage the friendship?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

4. Climax?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

4. Climax?

He can't face the truth yet. He backs away.
He protests.



Scene Analysis: *Restraint*

5. Resolution?



Scene Analysis:

Restraint

5. Resolution?

Penrith is unhappy but accepts John's decision and sees him out.



Nice work!



Now let's practice on a
filmed scene.♥



Extraordinary Attorney Woo



Scene Analysis:
Extraordinary Attorney Woo



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Story event: What happened?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Story event: What happened?

- Woo Young-Woo *meets* her boyfriend's family and *struggles to constrain* her behavior.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Story event: What happened?

- Woo Young-Woo *meets* her boyfriend's family and *struggles to constrain* her behavior.

How does that change Woo Young-Woo?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Story event: What happened?

- Woo Young-Woo *meets* her boyfriend's family and *struggles to constrain* her behavior.

How does that change Woo Young-Woo?

- Willing but nervous → doubtful and ashamed



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

Story event: What happened?

- Woo Young-Woo *meets* her boyfriend's family and *struggles to constrain* her behavior.

How does that change Woo Young-Woo?

- Willing but nervous → doubtful and ashamed
- Hopeful of the relationship → In serious doubt



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

1. Inciting Incident?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

1. Inciting Incident?

- Woo Young-Woo and Lee Jun-Ho arrive.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

1. Inciting Incident?

- Woo Young-Woo and Lee Jun-Ho arrive.
- Intentional.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

- Complications?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

- Complications:
- Her behaviors make her hosts uncomfortable.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

- Complications:
- Her behaviors make her hosts uncomfortable.
- The sister has spent two days preparing the feast.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

- Complications:
- Her behaviors make her hosts uncomfortable.
- The sister has spent two days preparing the feast.

Turning point?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

- Complications:
- Her behaviors make her hosts uncomfortable.
- The sister has spent two days preparing the feast.

Turning point:

- There's no food she can comfortably eat.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

3. Crisis: (in subtext)



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

3. Crisis: (in subtext)

Eat food she can't tolerate in order to please her hosts and her boyfriend?

OR Respect her own autonomy by not eating, but offend the hosts and her boyfriend?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

4. Climax?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

4. Climax:

She manages to eat a mouthful.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

5. Resolution?



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

5. Resolution:

Her efforts have failed. The sister doesn't accept her.



Scene Analysis:

Extraordinary Attorney Woo

5. Resolution:

Her efforts have failed. The sister doesn't accept her.

(POV shifts to Lee Jun-Ho, then back to Woo Young-Woo.)







Good job.
Let's recap.



Definition of
a scene.





Seven
elements of a
working scene.





How to analyze a scene.

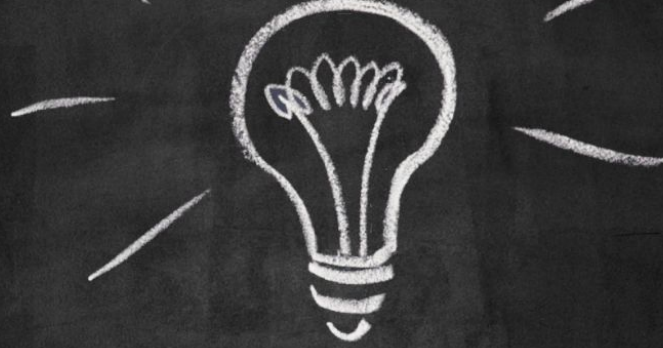




And now...



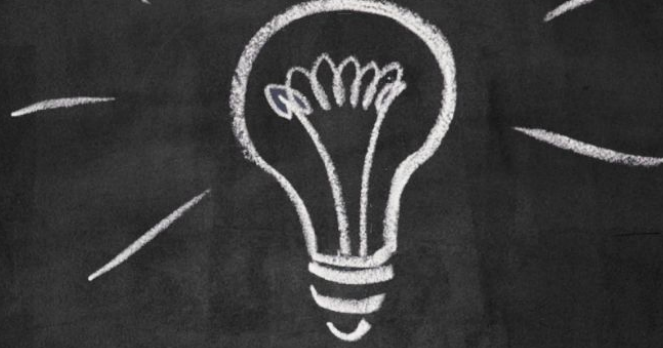
You can use the
tools of scene
analysis...



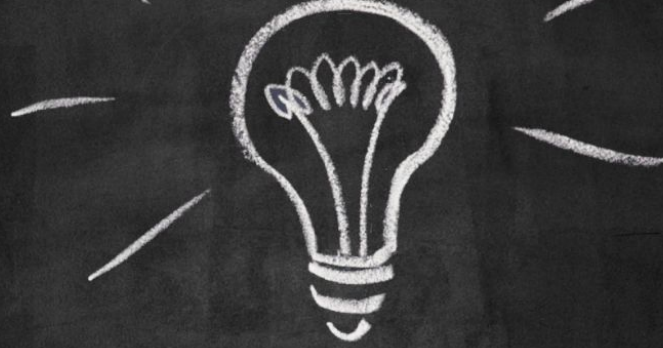
to discover and fix
problems in your
scenes



(and other
writers' scenes...)



and make your
story better.



Congratulations!



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Questions & Responses

