

# **BASICS OF SCREENWRITING STRUCTURE**

## **Feature Film**

### **THE SET-UP & EMOTIONAL HOOK**

Establish the normal world of the Protagonist. Establish the tone of the story and genre. If it's a comedy, make us laugh, if it's a horror, scare us, if it's drama make us cry or feel sad. If it will have adult content such as nudity give us a hint so we know if we want to go along for the ride. By page 2 there must be an emotional hook that grabs our attention and makes us care immediately. We learn about a trauma the Protagonist experienced or some injustice that makes us emotionally hooked in to see what will happen in the end.

### **A DAILY RITUAL HAS BEEN BROKEN/UNEXPECTED CHANGE**

The Protagonist observes that today is not like other days, something happens that off sets the normal ritual of life. (Page 3 - 9) We also learn what the Protagonist feels is missing in their life or in them. For instance we see that they lack self-confidence or self-esteem or self love or have something missing that they desire or aspire to be.

### **RESISTANCE TO CHANGE/THE ANTAGONIST IS INTRODUCED**

By page 10 the Protagonist refuses to acknowledge the change and tries to pretend like everything is fine and goes into some degree of denial. The Antagonist appears to the protagonist or the threat is there in some way. The CENTRAL QUESTION is posed such as "WILL THEY ACCOMPLISH WHAT THEY WANT/NEED BY A CERTAIN DEADLINE?"

### **A NEW WORLD, A NEW WAY OF LIFE**

By page 22, but no later than page 30, your protagonist accepts that things are never going to be the same so they reluctantly step into this new life/world/awareness.

### **THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEW WORLD**

Your Protagonist accepts the change and their ego finds a new goal as to how to make this new world work for them. They have learned new skills, but their old self is just caught up in their self-interest goal which perpetuates that which they feel they are lacking. That which they need/want is presented to them but they reject it because they don't feel they deserve it or are too proud or have too much shame to accept the help. (They lack the awareness or consciousness to see the opportunity.) (By page 35 - 45)

### **THEY GET THEIR GROOVE BACK/GRACE PERIOD**

The Protagonist likes their new self and things are finally working. They are part of a new community and a new way of being. If it's a comedy it's a montage where they are having fun or building something. If it's a romantic comedy there is a kiss at the end of the scene or if it's a love story there is a love making scene. (by page 45 - 60)

## **THE ANTAGONIST RETURNS**

Your protagonist finally feels at home in their new life and they think everything is fine now, but then the antagonist returns to surprise them with a new detail that the protagonist hopes will never emerge, something that makes them feel ashamed or is their weakness, “achilles” heel. (This is just a hint that will eventually be shown at the confrontation.) (By page 60 - 75)

## **THE AVOIDANCE OF THE CONFRONTATION**

Your protagonist will do whatever they can not to confront the antagonist. They use their old coping skills, but they do not work. Confronting the antagonist requires a new way of being with a new set of skills and even a team or a new community. (By page 65 - 75)

## **THE CONFRONTATION**

The Protagonist must confront the Antagonist. The truth will finally come out. The Antagonist will use what causes the Protagonist shame to take them down, but the Protagonist is no longer fighting for their self-interest, they are fighting for something greater. (By page 75 - 85)

## **THE SURRENDER**

The Protagonist no longer has anything left in them and they surrender to a higher power in their desperation. The divine gives them a hint, helps them in one small way, or creates an opportunity that the Protagonist notices or allows themselves to take. (By page 85 - 95)

## **THE CLIMAX**

At the highest point of tension the Protagonist reveals who they really are. Are they their old scared/arrogant/egotistical self or are they a courageous person who will fight for what is right (for the light/love/truth). (By page 85 - 90)

## **THE SACRIFICE**

The Protagonist makes a powerful decision. They sacrifice their selfish needs/goals for the betterment of the world or for someone else’s happiness, understanding that their needs are not as important as those “below” them or those who don’t have the same opportunities as them or those who can’t even fight for themselves. (By page 85 - 95)

## **THE RESOLUTION/PROTAGONIST IS REWARDED**

The Protagonist no longer needs what they wanted because it now lives inside of them, they have become that which they wanted, but no longer need it. They are now able to have what they couldn’t have before. The Protagonist gets rewarded in an unexpected way for their courage. If it’s a comedy and the Protagonist has struggled a lot without results, they get a big reward in the end. (By page 90 - 100)

**THE END**