HORROR

Writing Bootcamp

with

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WEEK TWO – THE GOOEY GUTS



INFINITE MONKEYS

Publication Opportunity

https://luwgenremonkeys.wordpress.com/submissions-2/

* Theme: Retellings of Myths in a Sci-fi setting.
* Original submissions only, non-exclusive publication rights if selected (no reprints).
* 5000 words or less.
* Submission Deadline: October 31, 2026 12:00 am (midnight, at the end of October).
* Target release date: Spring/Summer 2027

Open to the members of the Infinite Monkeys (meaning you have paid current dues to the League and designated the Infinite Monkeys as either your primary or second chapter).

Critique & Workshop

STORY

- If it means nothing to you, it'll mean nothing to readers
  - If it's not scary to you, it won't be scary to readers
- Theme
- What if…
  - and then suppose…
    - and *then* suppose…
- Chain of LINKED events

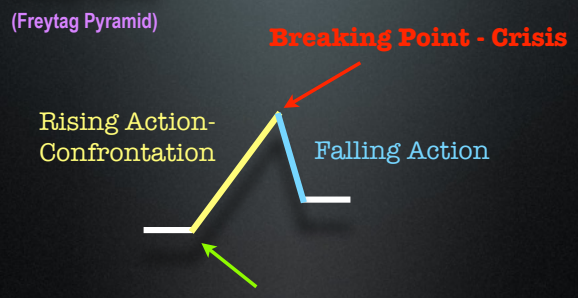
NO PROMISES

- Romance - Happily Every After (for now at least)
- Horror - Buy the ticket, take the ride. Good luck

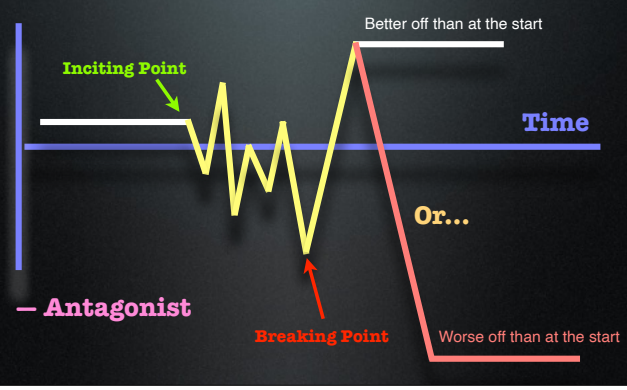




Story Arc
Plot & Character



Struggle



CONFLICT

- Two opposing forces struggling against each other
  - Opposing goals
  - *Interaction between protagonist and ADVERSARY*
- In Horror the bad guy can and often does win
- Change?



CHARACTERS

- We have to care about them
  - interesting
  - realistic?
  - sympathetic
  - Multi-dimensional (or not?)
- Has (or gets) skin in the game
  - Directly threatened
  - Is the threat?



THE ADVERSARY



- The most important character
  - *Man?*
  - *Monster?*
  - *Madness?*
  - *Milieu?*
- Scary, distant, dangerous

SUSPENSE

Do you want to know how to create suspense?

TENSION = RISING STAKES

- One step forward (solve a problem)
  - Two steps back (get a bigger problem)
- It's bad
  - It's worse
    - It's worse still
      - It's even worse than that
        - The worst!
          - Oh my… you've got to be kidding…
- **What's the worse that can happen?**
  - **Get there in steps**



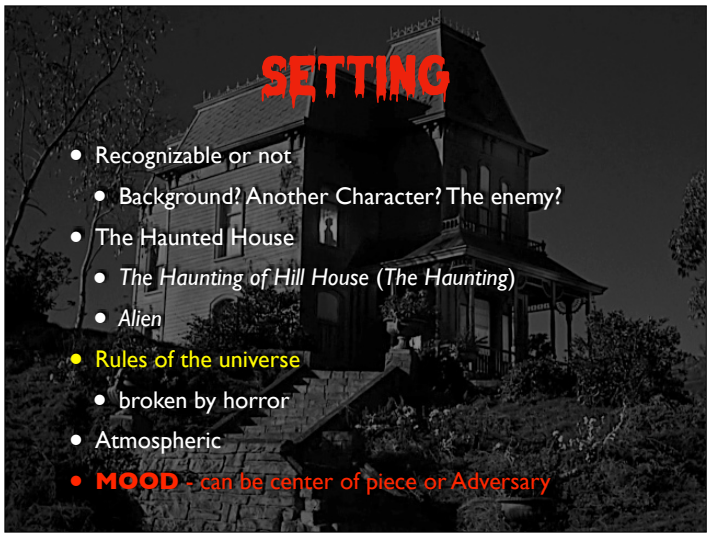
EXERCISE

- **PLANNING FOR TROUBLE**
  - **Make a 5 point tension list**
    - Problem
      - Bigger problem
        - Bigger bigger problem
          - Bigger bigger bigger problem
            - The worst problem
  - Think how solving one problem could lead to the next

STAKES



- **DEATH, always DEATH**
  - personal, professional, spiritual, social, psychological, the species, the universe, etc.
  - If it's important to the character, it'll be important to there reader



EXERCISE

- **BREAKING EXPECTATIONS**
  - **How can we turn these place scary?**
    - Nursery
    - A furniture store
    - Choir practice
    - A football game

SUSPENSE

- **Asking questions and delaying the answers.**
- Ask 10 Questions
  - Answer 8 and ask 5 more
    - Answer 6 ask 2 more
      - Answer all but 3
        - Answer 2 ask another
          - Answer the last ones
            - Twist

TITILLATION

- Horror like Erotica benefits immensely by teasing
  - Foreplay
- Conceal and not reveal
- **Once the monster/threat is revealed it becomes manageable**
  - The biggest erogenous zone & the scariest horror is in the reader's mind
  - *Horror vs. Terror*

INTIMACY

- Loneliness / abandonment / cut-off / disbelieved
  - Powerful primal fears/emotions
- Tragedy vs. Comedy
  - Close Up vs. Wide Angle
- Intimacy creates heightened personal stakes
  - *Alone in a creepy house vs. surrounded by fellow soldiers in foxhole*

EXERCISE

- IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDER
  - **Character moving into lair**
    - Don't know it's a lair
    - Abandoned Mall/House/Camper
    - Foreshadowing
    - Gross Out/Horror/Terror
  - **Rising stakes**
  - **Fear in NOT knowing**

USE HORROR SPARINGLY

- Really
- Horror is taxing and loses its effectiveness quickly
- Too much excitement dulls the senses
  - (again, like sex)
- Manipulative
- Intersperse moments of RELIEF
  - A laugh is close to a scream



HOMEWORK

- **Write a Flash Fiction Story up to 500 words**
  - **incorporating all three parts of horror**
    - Revulsion, Horror, and Terror
  - Beginning, Middle and End
  - For Critique
    - Standard Manuscript Format
    - email to me by THURSDAY NIGHT at:
      - johnny@johnnyworthen.com
      - .doc, .docx, or .pdf formats please
      - (OR bring enough copies for everyone to read)
- Spinning Yarns Submission Due 10/31/25 6:00pm