

A MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION

DREAMFORGE

Story Acorn and Scene Tending

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CONNECTING DREAMERS - PAST AND FUTURE

IMAGINE • ENGAGE • INSPIRE



Story Acorn

- DRAW THE CURTAIN
- LIGHT THE FUSE
- FIGHT OR FLIGHT *
- DO OR DIE
- CLOSE THE CURTAIN | APPLESAUCE

*The rest of the story hinges on engaging with the challenge or running from the threat.

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Scene Tending

- CHARACTERIZATION
- SENSE OR FEEL
- PERCEIVE OR ACT

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What's the Point?

There are many ways to describe basic story structure. Today, we're going to pare the elements of a short story down to the smallest possible set of elements I can think, the simplest possible starting point.

Then we'll add 3 basic scene components that we can shuffle around and use to breathe life into each of the story's scenes.

Let's Do it Live!

Starting with an Example to Demonstrate each Point

Our Next Step is to Follow the Pattern Live!

We Won't be Able to Write a Whole Story,
but We can Plant an Acorn and Tend some Scenes

Terminology

MC – Main Character, Viewpoint Character, Protagonist

SC and TC – Secondary Character, Tertiary Character, etc.

OP – Opposing Character, Villain, Bad Guy, Antagonist

NPC – Non-Player Character, Minor supporting roles or background characters

Draw the Curtain

Garbage Day. A Trash Collector (MC) running a one-man collection vehicle on a suburban street approaches the house that always leaves out too much waste. Unusual waste.

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

The Trash Collector feels taken advantage of... there are supposed to be waste limits. He perceives the homeowners as migrants – should he talk to them? He acts to open one heavy bag surreptitiously and take an unusual item, a small electronics component.

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Light the Fuse

At home, the Trash Collector (Harry Cole) fiddles with electronics in his basement. He has quite a setup. He has attached the electronics component to meters and gauges. He has no idea what it is.

Harry's friend Leo comes over for a Board game and sees the strange component – he knows what it is!

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Harry wonders if he should turn the homeowners in to his boss for illegal trash. Leo; however, is overly excited. "It's a chronoceptor."

Leo, an old SF magazine collector, runs home to get copies of old Cometary Digest from the 1940s, when they cared more about gizmos than climate change.

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Fight or Flight

Heart of the Story. 1-3 scenes. What's the Plan and How Does it Go Bad?

- ❑ Harry and Leo pick up more trash and see what it amounts to. Just as in the magazines, these are components of Chronomodulator – a time machine (but flawed or broken ones, of course).
- ❑ Harry and Leo determine to watch the residents and break into that house when they are gone.

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Harry is too straight-laced, but Leo's driving enthusiasm coerces him.

They break in, finding the homeowners secret lab – with perfectly fresh copies of the same magazines Leo has, plus other schematics.

They feel the overwhelming and immense power of the assembled machine.

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Do or Die

Climax of the Story. An Existential Threat is Confronted

They learn the time machine belongs to an alien time traveler.

She wrote the old articles in the 40s to catch the attention of her parts suppliers while stranded and out of touch. (time machines need constant maintenance and repair, including parts from ChronoZone delivery service.)

She's been trying to stop Earth space development before it can learn to deflect the giant asteroid that otherwise ends our civilization.

Harry and Leo decide to travel back and stop the aliens from developing time travel.

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Harry and Leo perceive that they can do this, but it will strand them in an alien past and no one will ever know.

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Close the Curtain

Harry and Leo are back in the past of some alien world, trying to figure out how to stop the aliens from developing time travel when Harry finds something interesting in the alien trash, picks it up, and the time machine disappears. Leaving them to make their way in the alien world.

Leo introduces the idea of Board Games, and they make a life for themselves on what otherwise would have been Earth's mortal enemies hundreds of years in the future.

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

The emotion at the end is a bittersweet “we saved the world, but no one will ever know.” They could be playing one of Leo’s Board games and the last line is “All part of the game.”

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Draw the Curtain

Orientation:

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Ideas:

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Light the Fuse

Inciting Incident:

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Ideas:

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Fight or Flight

1-3 Scenes

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Ideas:

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Do or Die

Climax:

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Ideas:

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Close the Curtain

Falling Action:

Scene tending | characterization, sense or feel, perceive or act

Ideas:

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Now, go and:

Plant Your Acorn

Tend Your Scenes

Watch Your Story Grow

THANK YOU!

AS ALWAYS, YOU'VE HELPED US BUY SOME STORIES, AND WE HOPE YOU'LL VISIT DREAMFORGE TO READ THEM!

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