

“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“to speak of other things...”

Crisis and Resolution in Fiction

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After School Village, Tarzana CA

Story is about a single moment in a character's life that ends in a defining choice, after which nothing will ever be the same again
_ John L'Heureaux



You are looking for something that cannot be undone once it happens



Slander and gossip are as impossible to take back as the feathers from a pillow case.



It could have been any gate, any moment when things go one way and not the other—an act of tenderness or a small, cruel thing done with a pocket knife. A child being born. Or the way we move from sleeping to dreams, as a river flows uneasy under ice. Jenny George



The One Way Gate

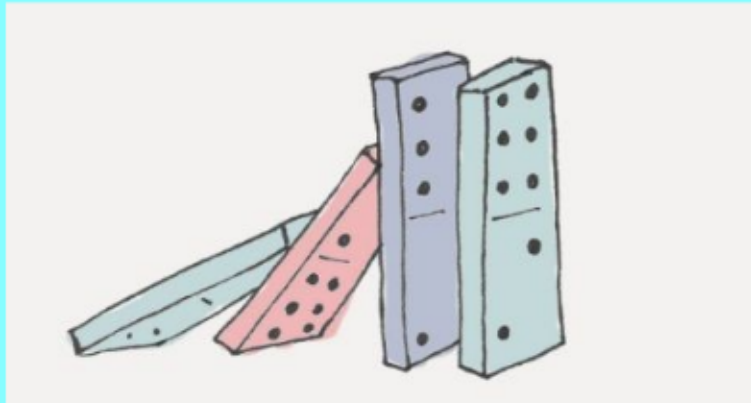
- Can you give examples of:
- An action that cannot be undone?
- An emotional wound that cannot be healed?



These are the kind of things
come to define your character.
Now she is the person who has
done such and such a thing.

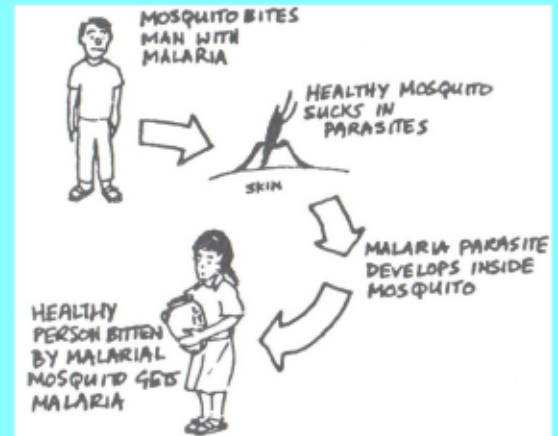
Getting to the Crisis

- As you know, writers keep on looking for ways to destabilize their characters.
- One error will likely to lead to another one and another one, and things can get very messy!
- Your character will move past this one way gate and not be able to return to their former self/life.



Let's test this out...

- A man murders another man
- Now what does he do?
- And now what does he do?
- And now what?



Charles Baxter (novelist) describes this as “accelerating irrevocable consequences.”

“The Snowball Effect”



Your homework...

- This week, think about something that would be really challenging for your character and then think about what might happen next. How could it get even worse?
- See if you can come up with a chain of three wild events that are linked to and caused by one another.
- Did you come up with a “snowball effect”?

Lars Gustafsson (Swedish poet and novelist):

“We act in order to justify the acts that we have already committed. We take steps to give meaning to the steps we have already taken. Obstinate, we stay on at the bad hotel in order to give meaning to the fact that we were once stupid enough to book rooms there.”



- So, what does the person who stays on at the bad hotel now know about himself that he might not have known before?

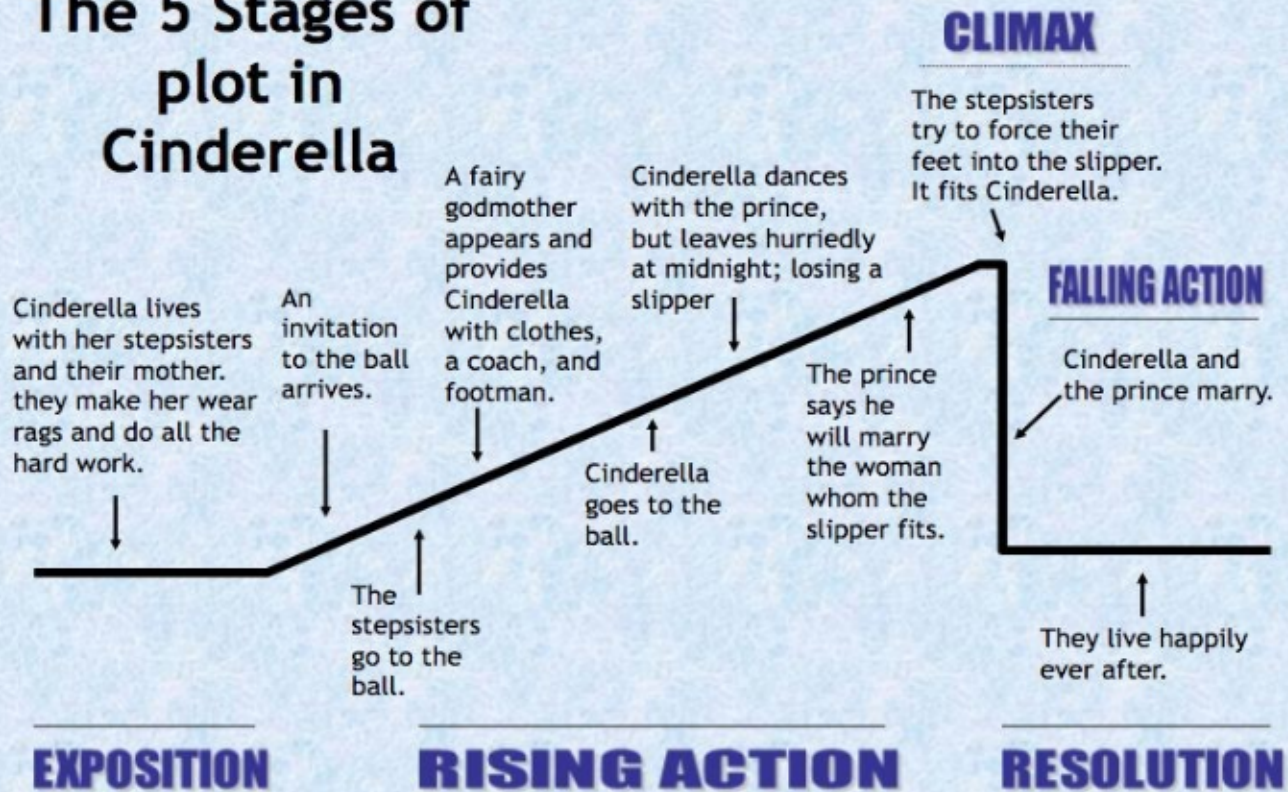


All the pressure of the story, the rough road trip, the last minute tickets, the insults shouted at the ticket clerk and the hospitality person, the beds that feel like tortoise shells, the overflowing toilet and his tremendous rise in frustration is all leading to this one moment, when the character knows this new thing...

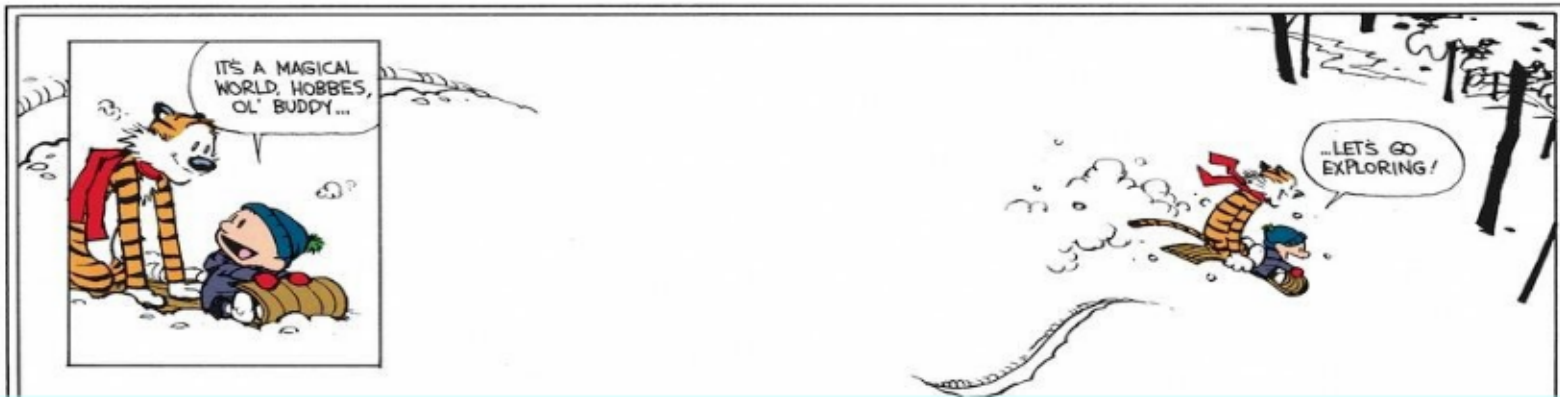
This is the essence of finding a conclusion for a story. A moment of ANAGNORISIS (removal of ignorance) when a character knows something new about herself.



The 5 Stages of plot in Cinderella



- Exposition = beginning
- Rising Action = middle
- Resolution = end



- When did something completely change for you, something that you couldn't reverse?
- How did it make you feel?



What, Of This Goldfish, Would You Wish?



<https://vimeo.com/49571389>



- What does Sergei know about himself that he didn't know before?
- What are the pressures that messed up his life enough to get him to know that?
- Can you think of a good one way gate that will make life very different for your character?

The best types of one-way gates are those that play against the character's deepest desire.

1. Sergei believes he is a good person. But he kills Yoni. One-way gate: Sergei is a murderer.
2. Sergei (being good) wants to use his last wish to reincarnate Yoni, but if he does it, he will lose his friend, the fish.
3. One way gate: deciding to reincarnate Yoni or leave him dead, because there is a massive consequence either way.
4. Sergei's second deepest desire is not to be alone. His deepest desire is to think of himself



Think About It:

- Have you ever done something you regret but couldn't fix? If you had a magic goldfish, how might you try to fix the situation?

