Novel and play 12

Troubleshooting

**Attitude**

* What makes our character intriguing? Which of our protagonist’s attributes might turn off readers?
* How do we reveal a character’s attitude toward herself or others?

 “In every picture you see of Eve in the Garden of Eden, her hair is draped oh-so-conveniently in front of her boobs, but, I mean, what if she would’ve been poofing her hair when the picture was taken?”

 “I don’t think it’s an actual photograph.”

 She went on, unfazed. “Or how about this: Can you imagine how different our impression of Paradise would be if Eve would’ve been bald? I suppose at least the story would be a little more interesting to junior high boys.”

 “Point taken.”

 “Yeah, if he were to describe me, he’d probably say I’m too old for this sort of thing.”

**Complications**

* How to increase or slow down the pace?
* What kind of flashback is necessary?

Joe saw Anne waiting on the corner, and immediately remembered the first time they’d met. She was eighteen then, just out of high school, walking her poodle in the wrong part of town. He was the gentleman who gave her a ride.

 Now she saw him and waved. He pulled over to the curb. She was wearing the same green cotton dress she’d worn when they went to the Caribbean. He would never forget that trip. The weather was perfect the first few days. Then the skies opened; but they’d amused themselves well enough!

 “Hi, Anne,” she said, as she got into his Ford Fromage. “How was your day?”

 “I don’t know,” she shrugged, grinning. That was so like her. It was also like her mother, Joe remembered. He had known Anne’s mother before he’d ever met Anne. In 1963, when he was only eight. . . .

**Endings**

* Do I need an epilogue?
* Do I need to tie up all the loose ends?

Nefaro realized now that it was never to be. He had worked, he had slaved, he had clawed his way to the position of Vice President of Fluid Transport, Uphill. It had not been without its rewards. He had loved the power, the glamour, the luxuries—luxuries he could no longer do without. But the whole time he’d had his eyes on a bigger prize—Vice President of Fluid Transport, Downhill. Yes, that was his goal; only then would he be able to put his feet up and coast. But no, only Jack Bilge, of Bilge Hydraulics, would ever sit in that chair. And now Nefaro was the only thing that stood in the way of the big merger. He was nothing but an obstruction; he felt like a fly in somebody else’s ointment. Nefaro’s hand shook as he cocked the .68 Grump and pressed the muzzle to his temple. For a moment hope flared in him—was there a way out? No! It had all gone too far. Damn that merger! As he pulled the trigger he hoped there would be a way to atone for all his sins in the other world.

**Character**

* Describe your protagonist’s way of walking.
* Compare your protagonist to an animal or a movie star.

Joe was a medium-sized man with brown hair and brown eyes.

Alan wore a white shirt and blue jeans on his tall frame.

Melinda had a nice body and a pretty face.

**Protagonist**

* How do I add more quirks?

Joe woke at seven and toasted an onion bagel, slathering it with cream cheese. He read the Wall street Journal while eating his breakfast, then headed out to his Lexus to drive at an illegal 65 miles an hour to the gym. He did some cardio first, then lifted weights, working on his pectorals and triceps.

 After a quick refreshing shower, Joe left the gym and got to work just five minutes late. Like every morning, he said “Howdy” to the secretary, who, as she always did, laughed and said “You scamp!” He went into his office and began his routine of blah while he admired the same view of blah blah that was just the same as every other day on which blah and like clockwork blah blah until it began to seem as if life was an empty series of meaningless actions.

Melinda suppressed a grimace of concern as she saw the homeless beggar on the subway stairs. Was five dollars enough? She decided it would have to be; she still had her sister to support, and her mother might need that heart operation. How she wished she could work even longer hours, though the work was grueling. Melanda tried to keep the other girls’ spirits up, always ready with a joke or a kind remark. “I don’t know what we’d do without you,” Esmerelda was always saying in her Salvadoran accent. All the women on the assembly line would nod in agreement.

**Sidekicks**

* Who are the three most important characters in my protagonist’s life at the beginning?

Joe let his eyes linger on her bright blue eyes, her perfectly tanned skin, her long blonde hair. Melinda could have been a model—if it weren’t for the largeness of her perfectly shaped breasts. Her arms were slender and golden, her legs were long and shapely. She looked like a cross between Scarlett Johansson and Angelina Jolie—only better. Joe didn’t think he’d ever been so much in love.

Suddenly Joe perked up. Down the dank hallway came a shapely girl. It must be the daughter of the prison warden; what other girl would be caught dead in a jail after dark, when all the other staff were asleep? She caught his eye and smiled guiltily.

 “Hey, gorgeous,” he said.

 “Are you talking to me?” She paused with a shy air. Then they both laughed.

 “Well, I wasn’t talking to Basher Jones, the psychopath incarcerated across from me! Anyway, he’s conveniently asleep.”

 “Conveniently?” she purred. From the way she cocked her head, Joe knew it would be no time before the ring of keys on her juicy hip—and the delectable girl herself—were in his possession.

**Bad guys**

* **Why should we not spend too much time in the villain’s point of view?**

Gruella sat at her onyx desk, idly pulling the wings off a fly, and thought about Joe. The weakling would do anything for that simpering daughter of his. Cruella had nothing but contempt for that sort of sentimentality. She had half a mind to engineer some “accident” to remove the brat once and fall all. It would be diverting to see Joe’s misery—all the tears and fuss for nothing but a child! Then the poor fool wouldn’t have the strength to keep up his optometry work—that sickeningly generous two-for-one offer of contact lenses would be gone forever, leaving legions of the poorest in darkness! Yes, an accident—just like the one Cruella’s own whining son had fallen victim to so many years ago!

**Words and phrases, sentences**

She gave him a deep, melting kiss before falling into his strong arms, swept away by her feelings. Her mind was a whirlwind of conflicting thoughts and emotions. The square-jawed he-man crushed her in a powerful embrace. “My darling, I’ll never let you go,” he swore.

 Her knees were weak. The hot-blooded Spaniard had broken through all her defenses. He was all she’d ever dreamed of.

 The sound of distinct gunfire shattered the silence. Only yesterday, she would have been scared out of her skin. But she had come to see that life was cheap in this banana republic. In the back of her mind, Melinda knew she would never be at home here, but she would stay by the side of this Latin lover who had stolen her heart.

Men were so difficult! At first Jack seemed to be so *into her*, but now Melinda didn’t know WHAT to think! He’d seemed *so cold* when she ran into him in the alley the other night, surrounded by his work associates, who were all **such rough men**!!!

Mike hit him with a metal bar and the man fell, dead. Mike left hurriedly, realizing he was going to have a murder rap. Getting in his car, he drove away fast, heading for a hotel. At the hotel he sat and decided what to do. He called his girlfriend and told her to pack his things. The police found the body and identified the killer as Mike by fingerprints on the bar. Before the police could track them down, Mike and his girlfriend got on a place to Europe. In Europe they went to the countryside and decided to buy a house with money the girlfriend had. “I need a gun, too,” said Mike. They bought everything, food too. Then they settled down and lived under European names. That was the past.

The zoo contained cages with animals in them. People walked past the cages, looking at the animals and talking. There were also places to buy snacks. The snacks available included hot dogs, hamburgers, and potato chips.

Childhood had been squalls from the fried well of a primal force contained within the tender membrane of his infant yearning. He looked at the photo again, the delicate features of the child melding into his electric memories in bat-like gyrations of scarlet-hued mind. Beauty was lost in the pain that guided him back. . . .

**Interior Monologue**

As I came into the room, I saw the light coming through the curtains and smelled the sweet aroma of the aspartame trees outside. I could feel the new warmth of spring in the air. I saw that Jim had taken his seat in the armchair, which I noticed was in need of cleaning.. I would see deep patches of grease where his arms rested.

 “Hi, how’d it go at Dr. Fenton’s?” I heard Jim saying. Then I felt the hot tears begin to flow down my cheeks.