THE STORY GRID GUILD
Writing Sprint for the week of March 23, 2020

Scene Assignment Type: A threshold guardian ushers the protagonist into their extraordinary world. Please have at least two progressive complications that lead to a value shift, then a best bad choice or irreconcilable goods crisis, a climax and then a resolution.

Here is a classic threshold guardian scene from Mad Men as reference:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxkCnacM15c

Character Number One: The threshold guardian is deeply familiar with a particular environment. And now they have been tasked with giving someone they have not met, the protagonist, the lay of the land. That is, it is their responsibility to introduce another person into their particular domain.

Character Number Two: The domain of the threshold guardian, and all of the other people that this character will come in contact with for the foreseeable future, is unknown to the protagonist. They have been tasked with a particular global goal. Either they have set their personal sights on some particular desirous future life state (internal motivation) or they have been coerced into doing something for their family or community or some other group or individual (external motivation).

Analyzing the Scene:

You may find the prompt is enough to get you writing without having to sweat the story grid structural details.

But you may find it easier to flow into the writing process by outlining the scene before you start scribbling.

Whatever the case, follow this simple process.

If you are energized by the prompt…just start writing and follow whatever pops into your mind without any hesitation or second guessing.

If you are befuddled and need to think through an outline, head on down to the "analyzing the scene" and "five commandments" prompts below.

Answering these questions should start poking ideas out of you. Once you get excited about a particular idea…start writing. You don't have to answer all of the questions before you begin. Just use as many as you need to generate some sentences.

You may get stuck before you complete a first draft of the scene. If that's the case, go back to the questions below and work through them as long as it takes to get you writing again. Don't revise the previous material until you've put together a first draft. So, if you decide to change the inciting incident in order to solve the crisis, change it later after you've created the rest of the scene.

The key element here is to only outline and edit when you find yourself stuck. And when you're writing, don't break to outline or edit until you absolutely have to.

Here are our SG scene tools.

A STORY EVENT is an active change of life value for one or more characters as a result of conflict (one character's desires clash with another's).

A WORKING SCENE contains at least one Story Event. To determine a Scene's Story Event, answer the following four questions:

1. What are the characters doing? In this case, the threshold guardian is giving the protagonist a tour of their environment.

2. What is the essential action of what the characters are doing in this scene? Take each character and figure out what their object of desire is for this scene. What does the threshold guardian wish to accomplish by the end of the tour? What does the protagonist wish to accomplish by the end of the tour? Make sure they are not the same thing. If they are, there will be no conflict.

3. What life value has changed for one or more of the characters in the scene? Someone is going to "win" the scene. And the other person will lose the scene. That means that someone will get what they set out to achieve. The other one will fail to get what they want. Evaluating the life value shift for both characters will enable you to get a tight grip on the conflict.

4. Which life value should I highlight on my Story Grid Spreadsheet? Let's add both characters' life value shifts to our spreadsheet for in-depth scene analysis.

HOW THE SCENE ABIDES BY THE FIVE COMMANDMENTS OF STORYTELLING

Inciting Incident:
Choose an unexpected event to drop into the scene that will require the protagonist to actively process. The drop-in unexpected event (a phere) could be a tool to achieve their scene desire or an obstacle that prevents them from achieving their scene desire.

Progressive Complication: After the unexpected event drops in, have at least two complications that threaten or encourages the goals of the protagonist. That is, they either make the likelihood of the goal to be realized lesser or greater than the prior beat/s.

Turning Point Progressive Complication:
Metabolizing the phere event will eventually lead to the value shift of the scene, which is the turning point progressive complication. The goal value state of the protagonist will be realized or not.

Crisis: With the value shift changing comes the crisis of the scene. What does the protagonist do in the face of not achieving their goal or getting it met? The crisis must boil down to a best bad choice or irreconcilable good.

Climax: The protagonist acts out their crisis decision.

Resolution: The threshold guardian and the protagonist react to the new value state.