

ROMANCE WRITERS SUMMIT

Just The (Romance) Turning Points

PLOT YOUR CHARACTER-DRIVEN ROMANCE
IN FOUR SIMPLE, POWERFUL STEPS

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TURNING POINTS

- Moments when the story (almost literally) 'turns'
- 'Big' story & 'little' story turns
- Percentages are guides not rules!

Four Big Story Turning Points

- **ROMANCE LAUNCH**
AKA: Inciting Incident
- **ROMANCE PUSH**
AKA: 1st Turning Point
- **ROMANCE FULCRUM**
AKA: Midpoint
- **ROMANCE IS LOST**
AKA: All is Lost, Dark Night of the Soul

ROMANCE
TURNING POINTS
TURNING POINT #1:
ROMANCE LAUNCH

Turning Point #1

Romance Launch

- *At/By* 10%
- Often called:
 - Catalyst (Save the Cat)
 - Inciting Incident
 - The Opportunity (Michael Hauge)

Turning Point #1

Romance Launch

- External Event
 - Upsets balance of life
 - Even if 'unhappy' balance
 - Romantic leads must respond
- Reveals Conflict
 - In Story World
 - Trouble to be faced (story goal)
 - Opportunity to be seized (story goal)
 - Between romantic leads
- Forces leads together

Turning Point #1

Romance Launch

Shows how leads are
utterly wrong for each
other...

Turning Point #1

Romance Launch

...And how right

- The "promise" of them
- Each other's missing piece

Turning
Point #1

Romance
Launch

Conflict Is Queen

- **Conflicting Story Goals**
 - One wins/other loses
- **Antagonistic Forces**
 - Need not be 'villain'
 - Can be people affected by success/failure
 - Can be loving secondary characters
- **Other romantic lead is often antagonistic force**

Turning Point #1

Romance Launch

Conflict Is Queen (cont)

Conflict is also driven by...

- External Stakes

- Who else will be affected; How; How deeply

- Internal Stakes

- The "meaning" of success or failure
- Derived from backstory

Turning Point #1

Romance Launch

- Pro Tip: Don't establish or reveal all the stakes here!
 - Save some escalations & reveals for later in the story

Turning
Point #1

Romance
Launch

Keys to Romance Launch

- Forces leads together
- Fueled by external event
- Conflict in goals/wants/needs
- Shows why leads can never be together...and hints at why they must

ROMANCE
TURNING POINTS
TURNING POINT #2:
ROMANCE PUSH

Turning Point #2: Romance Push

- At or by 25%
- New opportunity or trouble has been introduced
 - In preceding scenes, or this one
 - Clarifies action they must take to seize/fix
 - And what 'success' will look like
- 25% is when make a choice
- Often called:
 - Break into Two (Save the Cat)
 - Second Turning Point/Change of Plans (Hauge)

Turning Point #2: Romance Push

Keys to Romance Push:

Triggered by external event...

EX:

- New information
- New danger/opportunity
- New/Increased stakes
- Ticking clock

Turning Point #2:

Romance Push

...that requires or offers
chance to join/align with
other lead...

- Forced to work/be together
 - But the option exists to say no! To have chosen a different path
- Pro Tip: Often the reason they say 'yes' is the very thing they need to 'find' at end
 - Although they don't see it/admit it now
- They see (or tell self) joining with other is best way to achieve goal

Turning
Point #2:

Romance
Push

...and they make pro-romance choice...

- Join with/move closer to the other lead
- Don't have to like it!
- But underneath 'grumbling,' affection/closeness growing. Only a partial hell.
- Must be concrete action
 - That creates some real world change
 - And puts deeper in romance

'Mission Accepted'
moment

Turning
Point #2:

Romance
Push

·
Launches them into 'new
world' of next section
·

Turning Point #2: Romance Push

Elements of 'new world'

- New experiences
 - Or familiar ones in new role/perspective
- In Story world but ESPECIALLY with other lead. Ex:
 - Rom lead tests beliefs/ways of handling/interpreting things
 - Rom lead doesn't respond the way others do
 - (Pro tip: Over time, they'll realize they like this self better)
- Former ways don't work (well) anymore. Ex:
 - Skills not (as) effective
 - Way of assessing/handling problems is off or ineffective
 - Relationship strategies fail to get desire results
 - Previous choices/experiences shown to be lacking/insufficient
- They fumble through, attempting new ways. Ex:
 - Try out new skills
 - Experience new emotions/thoughts
 - Often have 'ugly duckling' moment, esp. re: romance

Turning
Point #2

Romance
Push

Keys to Romance Push

- Active choice & action
- Always pro-romance
THEY don't need to be pro-romance, but their choice/action is
- Puts them into new world
 - In external world
 - In romance relationship

ROMANCE
TURNING POINTS
TURNING POINT #3:
ROMANCE FULCRUM

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

- 50%
- Major change in one or both/all leads
- Also called:
 - Midpoint
 - False Victory/Defeat (Save The Cat)
 - The Point of No Return (Michael Hauge)

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

What is the "major change"?

Multi-Step Process...
...that can happen in a heartbeat.

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

Step One:

Get new awareness...

- New information &/or development
- New understanding of:
 - problem/goal
 - self
 - other lead

Fueled by external event

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

Step Two:

...which changes how they
view things...

- a) External Problem/World/Goal
- b) Self
- c) Other romantic lead

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

Step Two
(cont):

a) Changes perception of
external world/goal...

Revise opinion/perception of original goal or original
problem/world/secondary relationships

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

b) Changes perception of self...

- Errors/limitations/personal 'issues' acknowledged, often for first time
- No longer satisfied with previous approach
- Recognize or admit they need to try a new way
- Insight is not full yet--still limited--but honest self-assessment occurs, prompting change

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

c) Changes/Cements perception of other lead...

- If this turning point is romance+...
 - They (begin) to acknowledge other person 'has a 'point'/validity
 - Acknowledge other lead is personally important, often for first time
 - Often willing to be vulnerable for first time
 - Sex often happens here for first time

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

What is the "major change"?
(cont)

Step Three:

- ...and these insights prompt a new goal...

Or they may re-commit to original at higher/deeper level

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

What is the "major change"?
(cont)

Step Four:

- ...and they take **ACTION**
 - DO something never would/could have before
 - Active vs. reactive for first time

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

What is the "major change"?
(cont)

Key for
Fulcrum/Midpoint
Action:

It's PUBLIC!

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

Midpoint change & action
almost always romance+

- At least for one lead

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

Sometimes an "I can have
my cake & eat it too"
moment

Turning Point #3

Romance Fulcrum

Midpoint act will have
CONSEQUENCES!

- In romance
- In external world
- Consequences (increased stakes, antagonistic forces, & difficulties) rise after this

Turning
Point #3

Romance
Fulcrum

Pro Tip:
Character thinks
they're done changing!

They think they 'get it' now & all will be
smooth sailing

ROMANCE TURNING POINTS

TURNING POINT #4:
ROMANCE IS LOST

Turning Point #4

Romance All Is Lost

- 75%
- Plot (+) or (-)
- Always romance (-)
- Also called:
 - All Is Lost/Black Moment
 - Dark Night of the Soul (Save The Cat)
 - Major Setback (Michael Hauge)

Turning
Point #4

Romance
All Is Lost

Exactly what it's called

Turning Point #4

Romance
All Is Lost

May gain external
goal/benefit...

Turning
Point #4

Romance
All Is Lost

...But at cost of romance

Turning

Point #4

Romance

All Is Lost

Everything they thought they understood (or could go on hiding from) is laid bare for what it is

A lie/inadequate/etc

Turning Point #4 Romance All Is Lost

Forces deepest, most painful realizations of story.

Final understand:

- What was motivating them to pursue story goal
- What was holding them back from romance
- What they need to change in self &/or in external world actions/pursuits

Turning
Point #4

Romance
All Is Lost

Insights prompt internal
transformation

Turning

Point #4

Romance

All Is Lost

Transformation is
completed--i.e. enacted &
proven--in Act III

Turning

Point #4

Romance

All Is Lost

What they choose to do after All Is Lost moment, in Act III, can often be framed as an issue of 'honor'

"Who am I when the chps are down?"

Turning
Point #4

Romance
All Is Lost

Almost always requires
sacrifice in upcoming Act III

Four 'Big Story' Romance-centric Turning Points

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