

EPISODE 77: STORY LOGIC PART TWO SHOW NOTES

"Oh, Come On!"

Coincidence, Convenience and Contrivance

These are the moments when a professional reader stops being immersed in the screenplay and starts seeing the writer manipulating it. The goal of story logic is to keep the writer invisible.

1. Coincidence Isn't Always Bad

Coincidence is usually easier to accept when it creates the problem than when it solves the problem. A coincidence can launch a story or make life harder. A coincidence that rescues the hero from the climax risks feeling like the writer intervened.

2. Convenience, Death by a Thousand Little Helps

Convenience is often less obvious than coincidence. One convenient beat may pass unnoticed; several in a row make the writer's hand increasingly visible. The security camera happens to be broken -- the phone loses service only when the plot requires isolation. -- character overhears exactly the one conversation they need -- The villain inexplicably fails to finish the job -- The one expert in the room knows the precise obscure fact required -- critical evidence is left where the protagonist can conveniently find it.

3. What Contrivance Actually Means

Coincidence is an unlikely event. Convenience is a circumstance unusually helpful to the plot. Contrivance is the feeling that the writer has manipulated events or behavior so noticeably that the audience can see the machinery.

4. Setup and Payoff, Playing Fair

A satisfying solution usually grows from something the screenplay has already established. Planting does not mean announcing that an object, skill or piece of information will matter later. Ideally, the audience accepts the setup naturally and recognizes its importance only at payoff.

5. The Protagonist Should Earn the Solution

Ask who actually solves the story's biggest problem. The climax is usually strongest when the answer emerges from the protagonist's choice, growth, sacrifice, knowledge, skill or relationship -- not from rescue by the screenplay.

6. The Logic Chain, BECAUSE / THEREFORE

Strip the screenplay down to its major beats and connect them with BECAUSE and THEREFORE rather than AND THEN. This happens. THEREFORE the protagonist makes a choice. BECAUSE they make that choice, the antagonist responds. THEREFORE the protagonist is forced into a more difficult choice.

7. The "Remove the Writer" Test

At any suspiciously convenient beat, ask: If I were not trying to force the screenplay toward my next planned scene, what would these people realistically do now? Compare that answer with what is actually on the page. Then ask a more useful rewrite question: What can I establish earlier so that the outcome I want becomes believable, causal and preferably inevitable?

The goal is not to make a screenplay perfectly realistic. It is to make the chain of cause and effect feel earned. You want the audience thinking, "Of course that's where this had to go," not, "I guess that's where the writer wanted it to go."