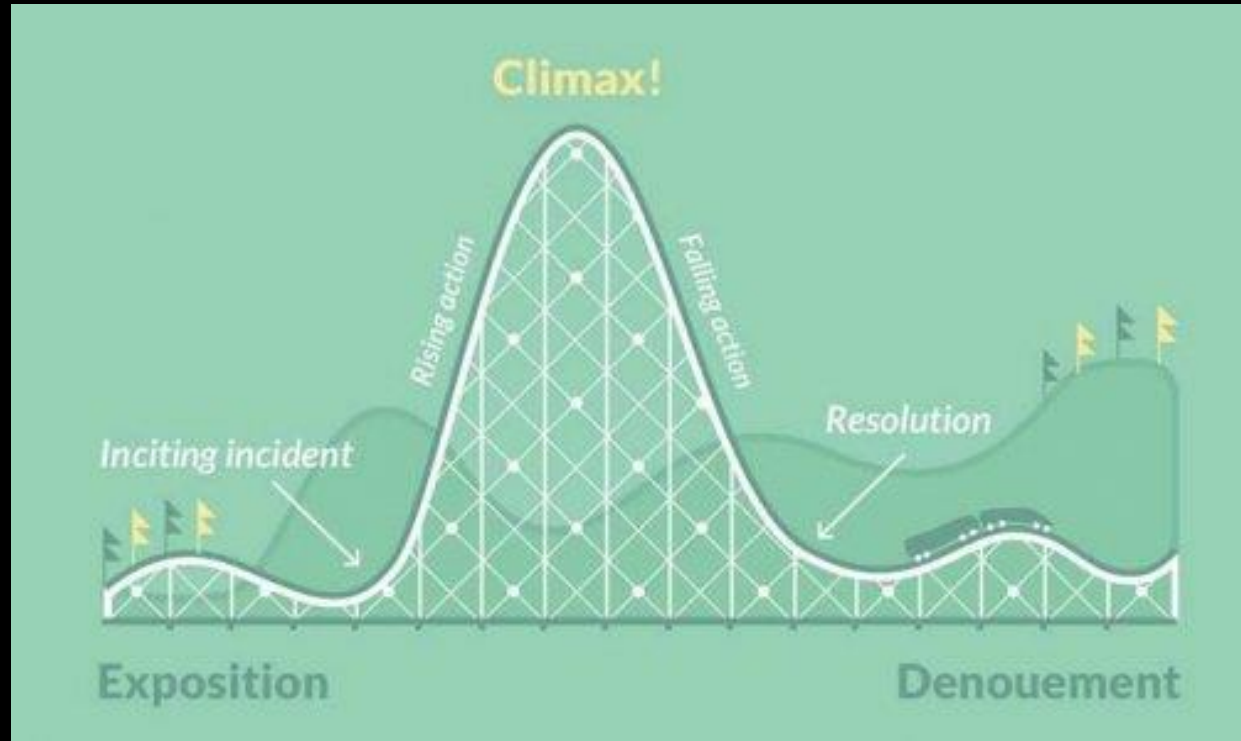


How To Create



High Impact Scenes

StephanieMorrill.com/OYANer

What is a scene?



“A unit of action or a segment of a story in a play, motion picture, or television show.”

Dictionary.com

What happens next?

~~What happens next?~~

- Story becomes a list.

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- Story becomes a list.
- Character motivations don't match the action.

Because of what happened
previously, what will my character
choose to do now?

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- Story progresses in a way that feels organic.

Because of what happened previously, what will my character choose to do now?

- Our characters are logical.
- Story progresses in a way that feels organic.
- Creates active characters.

Whose point of view should
this scene be told from?

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- Who has the most at stake?
- Who is the most vulnerable?
- Who could lose or gain the most?

What is this character's plan or goal coming into this scene?
What are they trying to make happen?

Character goal
=
Plan + expectation

Gap between expectation and
what happens
=
Scene tension

What obstacle stands in my
characters way? How is their
expectation foiled?

What decision do they make
as a result of that obstacle?

Interesting decisions in every
scene

=

Interesting stories

Within These Lines

Mrs. Ling holds out a beautiful navel orange, round and bold. “Share this with your friend. May it bring you both good luck.”

The market doesn't officially open for a few more minutes, but San Franciscans already mill about the rows of tables, haggling over prices of the first spring vegetables. The men who stole the Hamasakis' spot chat with customers, and the sight makes my chest burn.

I put the orange in my basket and pedal along the street. The fog has thinned, but my thoughts are hazy with anger.

At the ferry ticket booth, I pull coins from my handbag and place them on the counter. “When does the boat leave for Alameda?”

Scene Crafting Guideline:

Arrive late
Leave early

What is the outcome of my
character's decision?

(And do I show it now?)

Action, action, action, action,
action, action, action, action,
action, action, action, action,
action, action, action, action,
action, action, action, action...

=

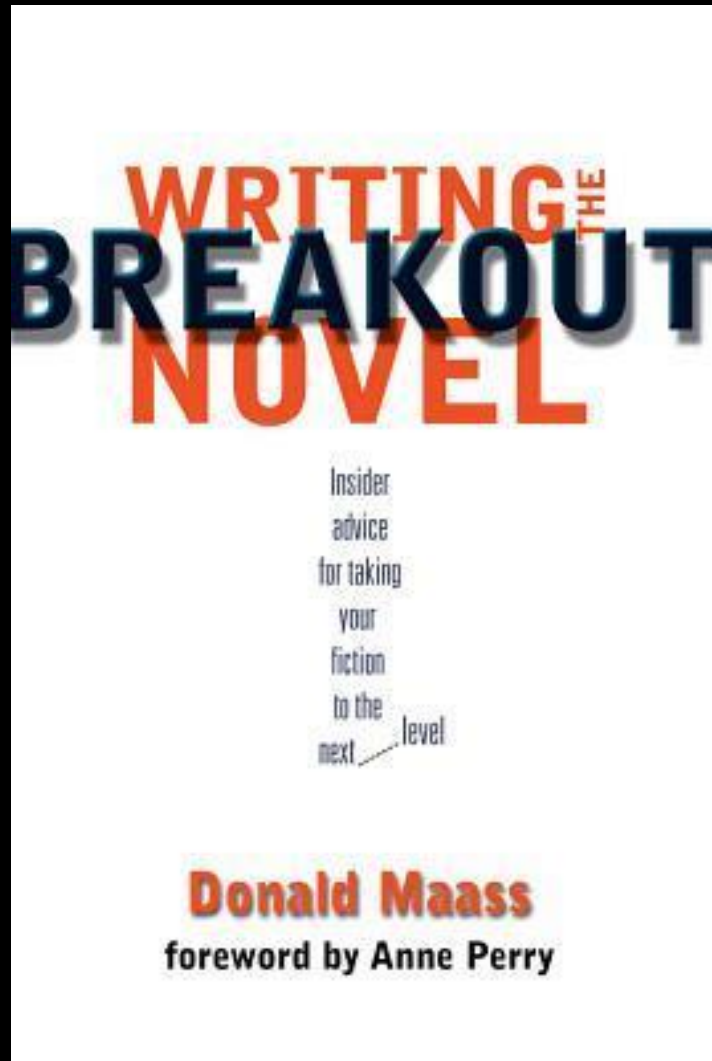
Reader fatigue

What's the outcome of the decision, and does my character need time to process what has just happened?

Amount of
processing
time

\leq

Size of
obstacle or
difficulty of
decision



“They are a pause, a marking of time, if not a waste of time. They do not do anything. They do not take us anywhere. They do not raise questions or make us tense or worried. No wonder they do not hold my attention.”

Within These Lines

“Evalina, you have flipped your wig.” But Gia sounds admiring, not admonishing. “I knew when you finally fell for a boy, you would fall hard, but you seriously took a ferry to Alameda?”

“What else was I supposed to do? He wasn’t at the market this morning, plus these articles in the paper ...” I swallow. “I thought maybe his family had been taken.”

“You are so dramatic sometimes. They’re not going to be taken. It’s all voluntary.”

“I don’t think so, Gia.” I twist the cord of the pay phone around my finger. “I think they’ll all be made to go.”

“I still can’t believe you took a ferry to Alameda. What are you going to tell your parents?”

“Hopefully they’ll never know. You’ll cover for me if they call or stop by, right?”

What reaction and processing moments can do for your story:

- Helps with character development

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- Helps with character bonding

What reaction and processing moments can do for your story:

- Helps with character development
- Helps with character bonding
- Helps reveal character motivation and logic

What decision is born out of
processing time?

OR

Because of what just happened,
what will my character decide to
do now?

Compiled list of questions

- Because of what happened in the previous scene, what will my character choose to do now? What is this character's plan or goal?
- What obstacle stands in my character's way? How is their expectation of what will happen foiled?
- What decision does my character make as a result?
- What is the outcome of my character's decision?
- Does my character need time to process and react to what has happened?
- If so, what is the decision born out of his processing time?

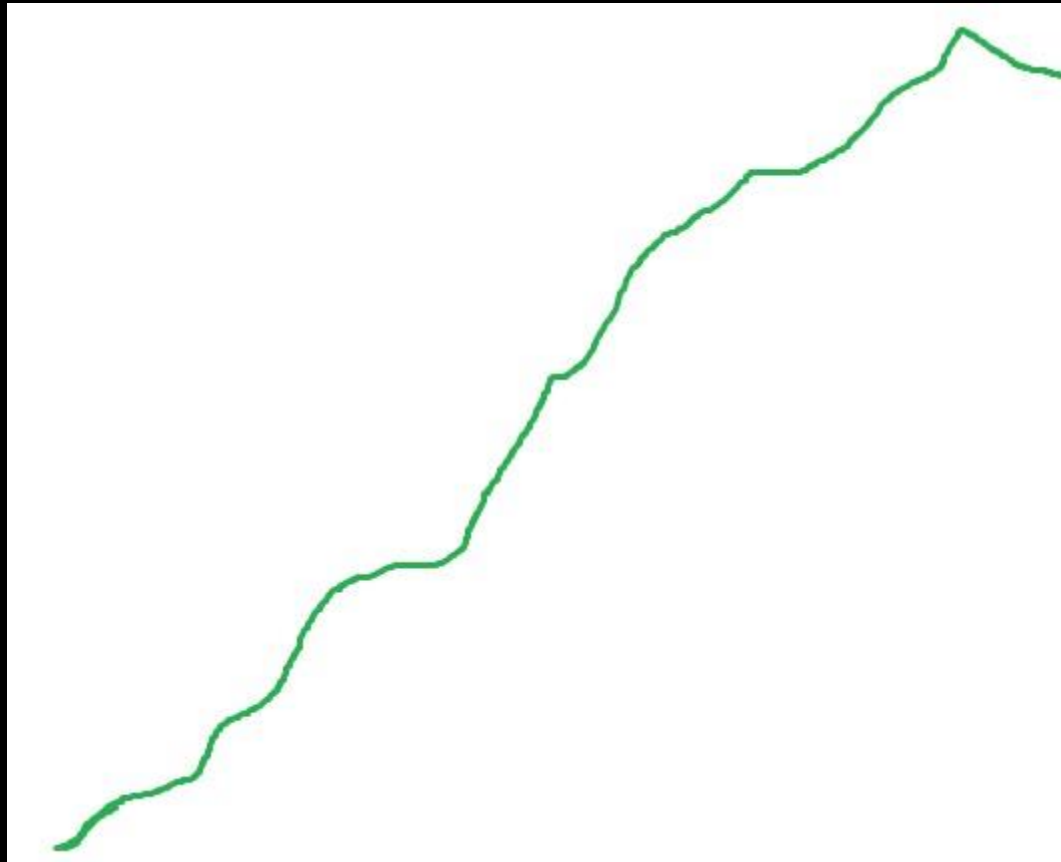
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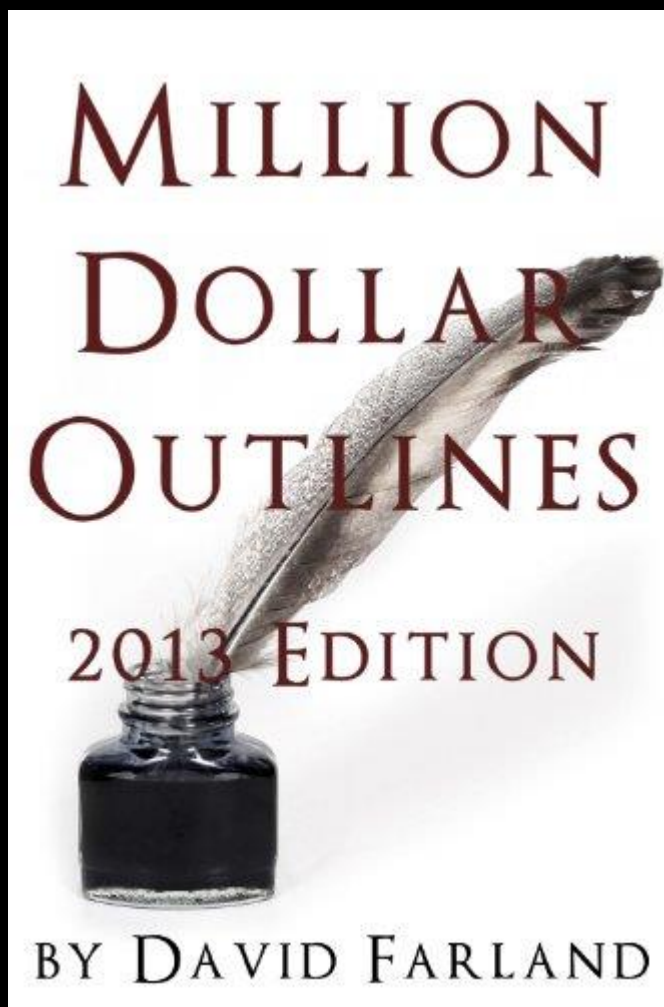
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“All stories must create a balance of stress. If I do not create enough stress in my story, the story will bore the reader. If I create too much stress, the story will become unbearable and the reader will put it down. My job is to create a pleasing level of stress that rises toward a dramatic climax, then resolves.”

What do I find interesting
about this scene?

Rachel Aaron's

2,000
to
10,000

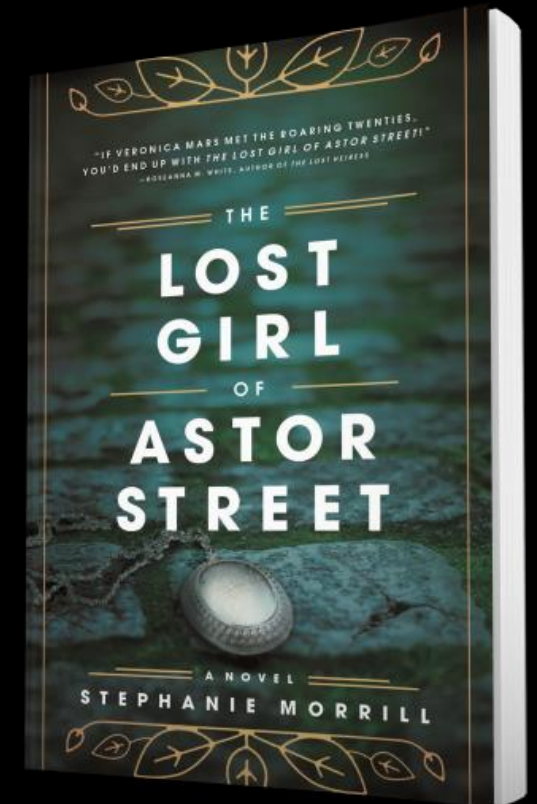


How to write **faster**,
write **better**, and write
more of what you love.

“If I had scenes that were so boring I didn't want to read them, then there was no way anyone would want to read them. This was my novel, after all. If I didn't love it, no one would.”

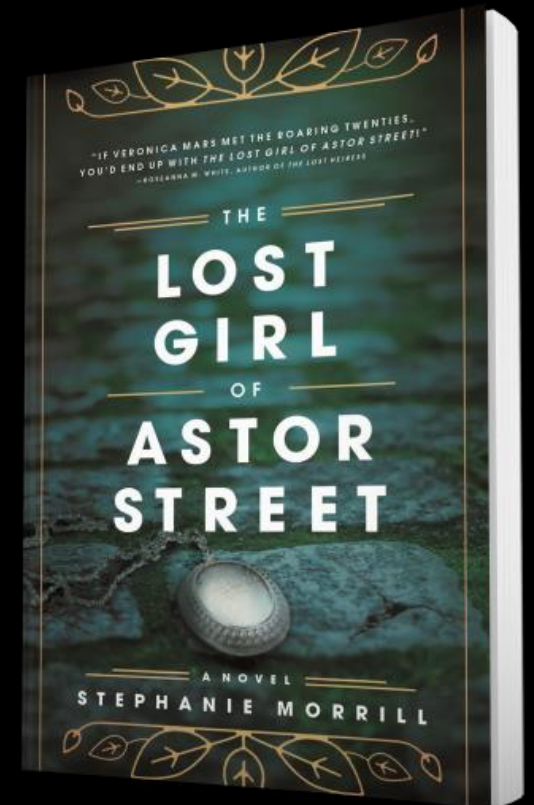
What is the opening hook or question?

I grasp my skirt to provide my knees freedom to run. “Lydia!” I’m yelling even though I know she can’t hear, that she’s not with us.



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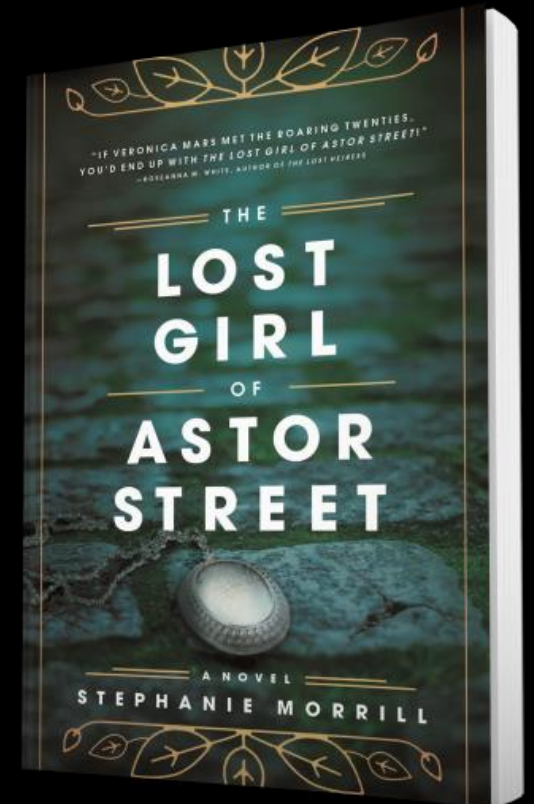
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I grasp my skirt to provide my knees freedom to run. “Lydia!” I’m yelling even though I know she can’t hear, that she’s not with us.

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“What’s this for?”



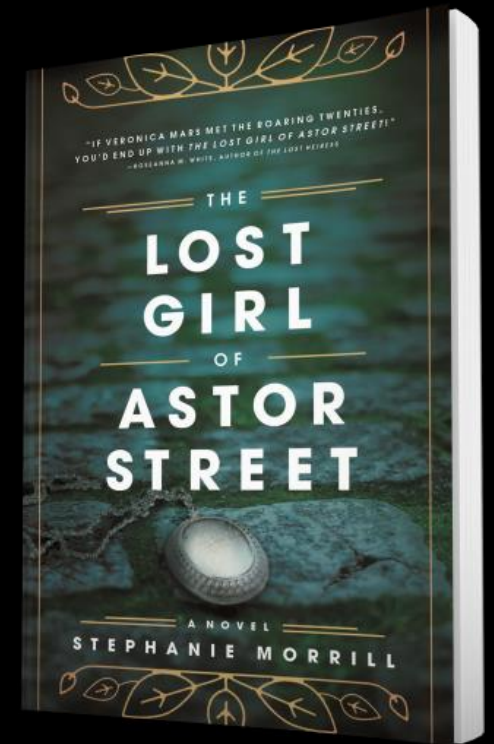
Have I provided context for my readers in the first 100ish words?

“I beg you to reconsider this.” Lydia’s words are spoken through pinched lips. Her gaze trails after the Hart Schaffner & Marx employee as he ducks into the back room. “Really, Piper. Buying a shirt for a man is far too bold a gesture. How could Walter not read into such a gift?”

“It’s my fault his shirt was ruined. I’m trying to be fair, not flirtatious.”

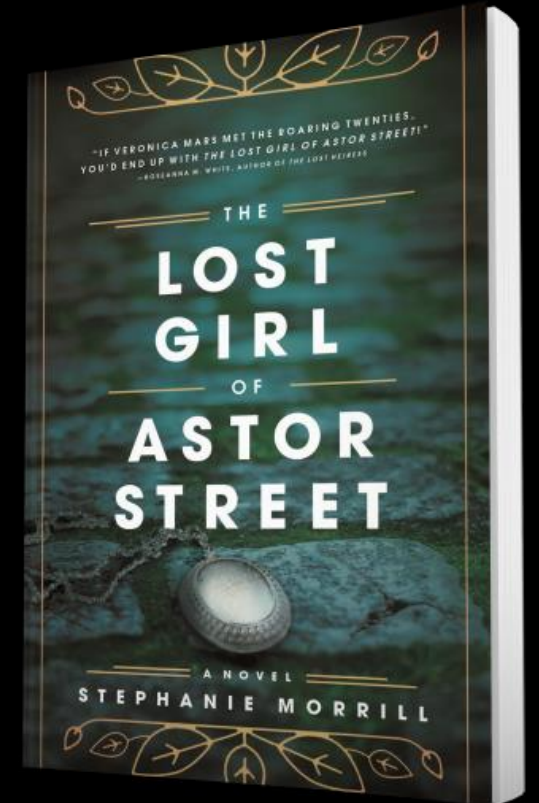
Lydia yawns. “And why would you have thrown a mud ball at him in the first place? You’re not a child anymore, Piper.”

I shrug and feign interest in the display of neckties, running the cool silk between my fingers. The store smells of cedar and mint and is oppressively quiet, like a library.



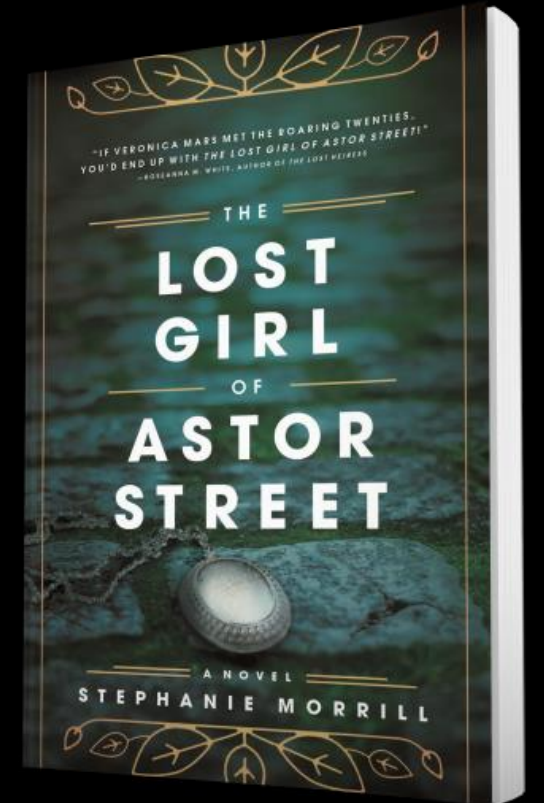
What is the closing hook or invitation to turn the page?

A scream rips through the bright blue afternoon—my own.



A scream rips through the bright blue afternoon—my own.

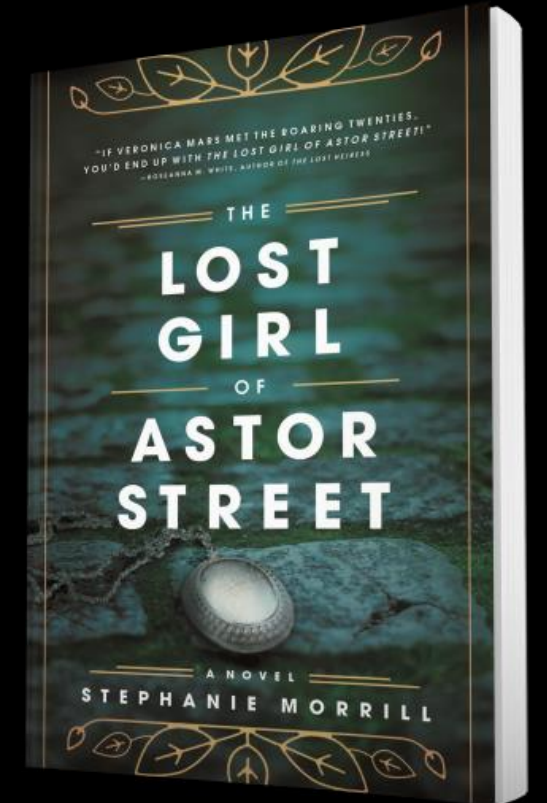
Nor can I talk myself out of the fear that Dr. LeVine prioritizes secrecy more than Lydia's healing.



A scream rips through the bright blue afternoon—my own.

Nor can I talk myself out of the fear that Dr. LeVine prioritizes secrecy more than Lydia's healing.

Oh, Lydia. What will become of you?



Storytelling is different than
writing.

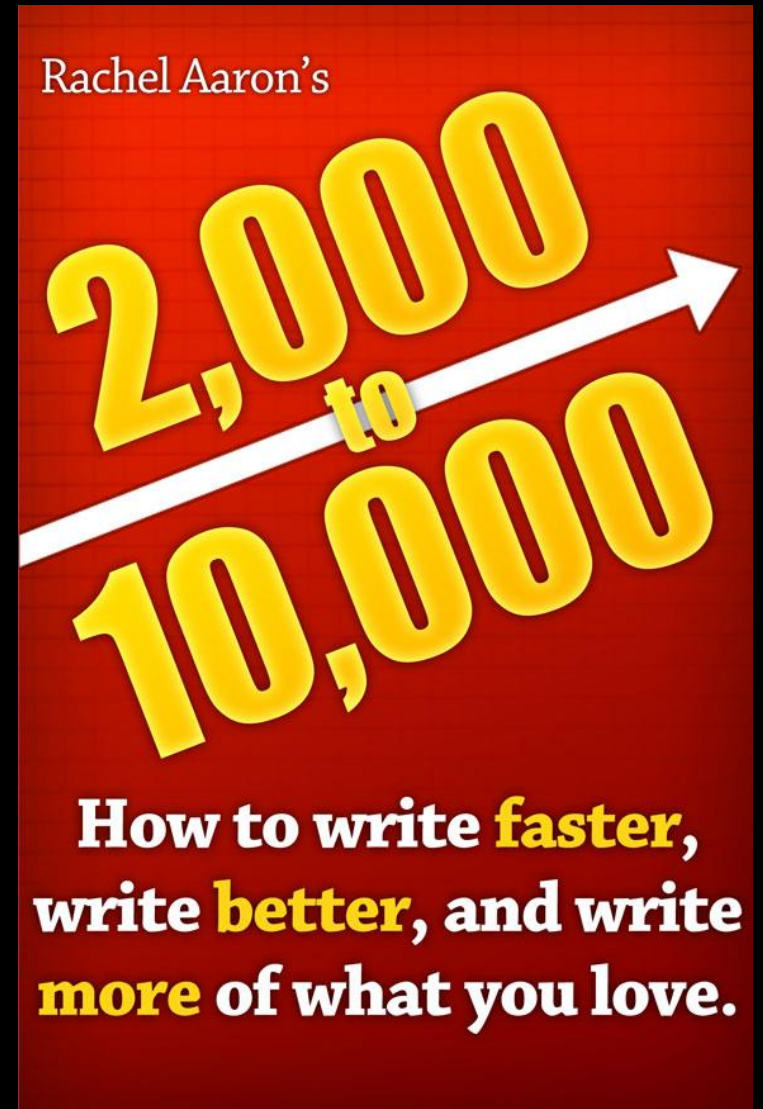
Rachel Aaron's

2,000
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How to write **faster**,
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“Here I was, desperate for time, floundering in a scene, and yet I was doing the hardest work of writing (figuring out what needs to happen to move the story forward in the most dramatic and exciting fashion) in the most time consuming way possible (i.e. in the middle of writing itself).”

“If you want to write faster, the first step is to know what you’re writing before you write it ... Every writing session after this realization, I dedicated five minutes and wrote out a quick description of what I was going to write that day.”



“Writing is, well, writing. It’s the art of putting words on the page in a pleasing way that accurately, efficiently, and sometimes artfully conveys information.

Storytelling happens across media ... Storytelling is the skill of finding the universal truths of human experience and translating them into cohesive drama.”

K. M. Weiland, “Are You A Writer Or Storyteller?”
June 5, 2017