

# PLOT WORKSHEET

## • STORY IDEA •

✎ Complete the sentence: *I want to know why...*

*People “settle” in relationships that may not be their version of romantic love*

## • WHO: CHARACTER •

✎ Who is your main character?

*Pat*

✎ Write ten facts about your main character, including a mix of demographic facts and facts that may not be visible to the outside world:

- 1. Her husband Harry died in a car accident about a year ago*
- 2. She has two young daughters, Lynette and Cynthia*
- 3. She wears big, round glasses*
- 4. She uses her smoking habit as a way to flirt and ward off social anxieties*
- 5. She'd rather wear jeans than a dress*
- 6. She grew up in Chicago*
- 7. She is a second-generation American (her parents were born in southern China)*
- 8. She works as a paralegal and hates it but doesn't know what else to do*
- 9. She worries that she'll never find love again, but feels kind of strong for being alone*
- 10. She loves to watch cheesy TV romance movies but doesn't tell anyone*

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✎ What is your main character's outside goal and outside obstacle?

- Outside goal: *To provide for and raise her daughters well*
- Outside obstacle: *It's difficult to raise her daughters on her own, as a single parent, still grieving her husband's death. She has to do it alone on her part-time salary, and in the suburbs, far from her family and friends.*

✎ What is your main character's inside goal and inside obstacle?

- Inside goal: *To find love and companionship*
- Inside obstacle: *She is a romantic who believes in "true love" (what she had with Harry) and doesn't want to settle for less*

✎ Who is your supporting character?

*Sam*

## • WHEN AND WHERE: SETTING •

✎ Write three paragraphs describing where and when your story is set, including descriptions from all five senses:

*Warwick, New Jersey is located thirty miles east of Manhattan, off of the New Jersey Transit train line. It has a population of 6,000 people and is 98 percent white. The air is clean and clear, and the houses are mostly brick, a mix of two-story homes and ranch houses. There are small, compact backyards which fill with leaves in the autumn, and old trees.*

*Every afternoon, the fire siren marks noontime. At three o'clock, school busses make their way across town from the schools, dropping children off at their homes. The streets fill with the sounds of children playing jump rope, kickball, and riding their bikes. On warm nights, there is the sound of sprinklers watering the yards, of summer barbecues, and crickets chirping.*

*In the small downtown, there is a pizzeria, a barber shop, a coffee shop, a post office, and a Pathmark grocery store. There are highways on all sides, linking Warwick to the city, and, closer, to the many shopping malls that clog with traffic on the weekends.*

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## • WHAT AND WHY: SCENE AND STRUCTURE •

📝 What is your character's core believe?

*In "true love"*

📝 Pit your character's outside goal and inside goal against one another in a way that forces them to confront their core belief and make a change or decision.

*Example: "In order to achieve [Outside Goal], your character must confront [Inside Goal] by..."*

*In order to receive the support she wants to raise her daughters, Pat can confront her romantic ideals - either she can compromise and "settle" or continue raising her daughters alone.*

📝 Write a one paragraph summary of your story, focusing on external action (if this was a movie, what would the camera see?):

*Pat and Sam meet at a party in Queens. On their first date, Pat brings her daughters because she can't find a babysitter, and they try to get pizza but the waitress refuses to serve them. At Pat's house, she tells him that her husband, the father of her daughters, died in a car accident last year. Sam and Pat stand in the backyard and look at the stars and kiss. They see each other every Sunday for six weeks. She tells him that after her husband Harry died, she drove her car into a pond. He asks her to come stay with him for one night in New York City. She gets a sitter and they have dinner in Chinatown and go back to his room in Brooklyn. He plays a record he loves, but she doesn't like it. They have sex and lie next to another, not talking, as Pat smokes. When Pat asks Sam if he's awake, he doesn't answer.*

Now break down the action of your paragraph into three scenes:

Beginning/inciting event: *Pat and Sam meet, go on first date with kids (parts 1-5).*

📝 How does your character feel at the beginning of the scene?

*Ambivalent about meeting someone new, still grieving Harry's death, fearful that she'll never meet anyone else*

📝 How does she feel at the end of the scene?

*Excited about seeing Sam again, hopeful*

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- ✎ What decision does your character make, and how do they change as a result?

*Decides to see Sam again*

Middle/rising action: *Despite their misgivings, they continue dating. Sam goes to visit Pat on six consecutive Sundays. Pat reveals more information about herself. (Part 6, first half of Part 7)*

- ✎ How does your character feel at the beginning of the scene?

*Sometimes she feels like she's falling in love, but she still compares Sam unfavorably to Harry.*

- ✎ How does she feel at the end of the scene?

*She feels relieved when she reveals her own car accident to Sam and he stays and puts his arm around her.*

- ✎ What decision does your character make, and how do they change as a result?

*She decides to get a sitter for the following weekend and stay over at Sam's apartment.*

End/falling action: *Pat stays over at Sam's apartment in NYC. (Second half of Part 7, Parts 8-9)*

- ✎ How does your character feel at the beginning of the scene?

*Trying to convince herself that this is love, this is what she wants*

- ✎ How does she feel at the end of the scene?

*She feels less close to Sam, but despite these differences, he's not a bad person.*

- ✎ What decision does your character make, and how do they change as a result?

*To stay with Sam.*

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## • HOW: PERSPECTIVE, SHOWING AND TELLING •

✎ Write a brief first draft of your story incorporating the previous exercises, plus perspective, showing, and telling to amplify the action. Start with one paragraph each for the beginning, middle, and end. Once you're done, you'll have a plot-driven rough draft ready for revision!