

# How to Write a Novel Using the Snowflake Method

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## Summary of the Snowflake Method

HERE ARE THE ten steps of the Snowflake Method.

The main purpose of these steps is to help you write your first draft. (When you're editing your story, you may also find these steps useful in helping you restructure your story and deepen your characters. But that's a secondary purpose.)

If you find that some of these steps aren't useful to you, then don't do them. You'll quickly learn which steps are most valuable to you. Focus on those. And if there are other steps that you find valuable, add them to your list. Your goal is to get a strong first draft. These steps are guidelines to get you there—they are not unbreakable rules.

After each step, you may want to revisit your earlier steps and revise your work. The earlier you make revisions, the better. The power of the Snowflake Method comes from helping you do many revisions early.

## First Things First

Before you do any of these steps, you should know what category of novel you're writing and you should know who your target audience is. Your goal as a novelist is to delight your target audience.

Defining your target audience means deciding exactly what kind of story you want to write. Then your target audience is the set of people who would be delighted by that kind of story. You may be in your own target audience. If you aren't, it may help to visualize one typical person in that audience.

Answer these questions in writing:

My category is: \_\_\_\_\_

This is the kind of story I want to write: \_\_\_\_\_

This kind of story will delight my target audience because:  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Step 1: Write a One-Sentence Summary

Give yourself one hour to write a single sentence that summarizes your novel. Make it less than twenty-five words if you possibly can. Focus on one or two characters and tell their story goal. Don't give away the ending.

The one-sentence summary is a marketing tool that you use to arouse curiosity. Shorter is better, because you want to memorize this sentence. Then, when somebody asks what your book is about, you can spiel it out without having to think.

The purpose of the one-sentence summary is to help people instantly know whether they are in your target audience.

If they are, then they'll say, "Tell me more!"

If they aren't, then they'll say, "My, look at the time!" and change the subject.

Your one-sentence summary also gives your fans a simple way to explain your book to their friends. So it's a key element of your word-of-mouth campaign.

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## Step 2: Write a One-Paragraph Summary

Give yourself one hour to expand your one-sentence summary to a full paragraph of five sentences, organized like this:

- Explain the setting and the story backdrop and introduce one or two lead characters.
- Summarize Act 1, ending with your first disaster. This disaster forces your lead character to commit to the story.
- Summarize the first half of Act 2, ending with your second disaster. This disaster causes your lead character to change his thinking from a false Moral Premise to a true one. As a result, your lead character commits to a new way of thinking and acting for the second half of the story.
- Summarize the second half of Act 2, ending with your third disaster. This disaster causes your lead character (and your villain, if you have one) to commit to ending the story.
- Summarize Act 3, in which you lead up to a final showdown where the lead character either succeeds or fails. You then resolve the story with a happy ending, sad ending, or bittersweet ending.

The purpose of the one-paragraph summary is to ensure that your story has a sound Three-Act Structure, with three strong disasters and a clear Moral Premise.

You will reveal your one-paragraph summary to your agent and editor, but *don't* reveal it to your potential readers! Your agent and



editor need you to tell them how your story ends, but your readers want you to surprise them.

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### Step 3: Write a Summary Sheet for Each Character

For each of your important characters, take up to an hour to produce a summary sheet that tells the essentials. Here are the things you need to know:

- Role: (Hero, heroine, villain, mentor, sidekick, friend, etc.)
- Name: The name of the character.
- Goal: The concrete goal of the character for this story.
- Ambition: The abstract ambition of the character.
- Values: Several sentences that begin, “Nothing is more important than ...”
- Conflict: What keeps this character from achieving his goal?
- Epiphany: What will this character learn by the end of the story?
- One-sentence summary: A one-sentence summary of this character’s personal story. (Your novel is the personal story of the lead character. All the other characters are the lead characters of their own personal stories.)
- One-paragraph summary: A one-paragraph summary of the Three-Act Structure of this character’s personal story.

You’ll find that not all of these make sense for all your characters. Often, the villain has no epiphany. Some characters are too minor to need a one-sentence summary or a one-paragraph summary. Don’t feel obligated to fill in everything for all characters.

## Step 4: Write a Short One-Page Synopsis

Give yourself one hour to expand your one-paragraph summary into a full page. Do this by expanding each sentence in that paragraph to a full paragraph of its own.

If you go slightly over a page, that's fine. This one-page synopsis is solely for your benefit. You will never need to show it to anyone. Its purpose is to help you start filling in the details in your story.

People sometimes ask if the one-page synopsis should be single-spaced or double-spaced.

This synopsis is for your benefit, so make it single-spaced. That gives you about five hundred words, which is about right. If you want to double-space it for readability, then you'll probably go over a page, but nobody's going to be grading you for page count, so don't worry.

---

## Step 5: Write a Character Synopsis for Each Character

Give yourself an hour for each character and write up their back-story, along with their role in the main story. Usually, half a page to a page is about right. Explain why that character is the way they are, what they want out of life, and anything else that you find interesting. Explain how they fit into the story.

These character synopses are for your benefit. They help you to empathize with each character. Give special attention to the villain, since he usually gets shortchanged. Try to get inside his skin.

If you do a good job on these, you may someday put them in a proposal. Editors love these! Editors love great fiction, and great fiction is built on strong characters.

Very few writers ever put character synopses in their proposals. This is a shame, because these are usually much more interesting than the plot synopsis, which is *required* in a proposal.

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## Step 6: Write a Long Four-Page Synopsis

Give yourself two hours to expand your one-page synopsis into about four to five pages. Just take each paragraph from the one-page synopsis and expand it out to a page.

This four-page synopsis is for your benefit alone. You don't ever have to show it to anyone. Its purpose is to help you flesh out more details in your story.

People often ask how this is related to the synopsis that you must include with a proposal. That synopsis should be a bit shorter—generally two pages minimum and four pages maximum.

I recommend that you write your four-page synopsis first and then cut it down a bit to create your proposal synopsis. Yes, this takes more work, but each of these synopses has a special purpose.

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## Step 7: Write a Character Bible for Each Character

Take several hours per character and drill deep into them by creating a character bible for each one. This is where you will save all the details about your characters. Here are the sorts of things I usually include in my character bibles:

- Physical information: Name, age, birthdate, height, weight, ethnic heritage, color of hair and eyes, physical description, and style of dressing.

- Personality information: Sense of humor, personality type, religion, political party, hobbies, favorite music and books and movies, favorite color, and the contents of his wallet or her purse.
- Environmental information: Description of home, education, work experience, family, best friend, male friends, female friends, and enemies.
- Psychological information: Best and worst childhood memories, a one-line characterization, the strongest and weakest character traits, the character's paradox, their greatest hope and greatest fear, their philosophy of life, how the character sees himself, and how others see the character.

If you look online, there are many long lists of questions you can use to help you write your character bibles. None of these are perfect, but they give you examples of what should go into a character bible.

In the next chapter, you'll find the questions I used in creating the character bibles for Goldilocks and the other characters in this book.

You may find it helpful to find a picture of a real person who looks like each of your characters.

Here is your place to go deep. You want to know your character's family history, their religion, their politics, their philosophy, their personality type.

And of course, there are an endless number of superficial questions you can ask about each character. There are authors who insist that you should know each character's favorite ice cream. If that matters to you and your target audience, then write it down. If not, then don't.

## Step 8: Write a List of All Scenes

Take a few days to create a list of every scene in your novel.

The scene is the fundamental unit of fiction. Each scene happens at a particular place and time and includes certain characters.

Each scene needs to have conflict. If there is no conflict in a scene, then it's not pulling its weight and you need to add conflict or kill the scene. Don't put in scenes that just "add atmosphere" or "explain the backstory" or "show the character's motivations." Conflict is the gasoline that makes a story run.

I recommend using a spreadsheet to write your scene list. Each row of the spreadsheet will represent one single scene.

You'll want one column to tell the point-of-view character of the scene. Another wide column will summarize what happens in the scene. You may add more columns with time stamps, projected word counts, or anything else. You are free to make your spreadsheets as complicated or simple as you like.

Some writers use 3x5 cards, with one scene per card. This works, but there are advantages to using a spreadsheet.

However you do it, make this list. It helps you see the story at a glance, and you can move scenes around as needed.

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## Step 9: Write a Plan for Each Scene

Take five minutes for each scene and jot down some crucial information that will help you write it. You may want to make a list of characters in the scene. You may want to describe the setting. If you have some amazing dialogue snippets for the scene, this is the place to save them.

I highly recommend that you analyze the scene's conflict. Is it a Proactive Scene or a Reactive Scene?

A Proactive Scene has this structure:

1. Goal
2. Conflict
3. Setback

A Reactive Scene has this structure:

1. Reaction
2. Dilemma
3. Decision

There is no standard length for a scene. A scene can be a hundred words or five thousand words. My own personal average for my suspense fiction is about a thousand words per scene, which is four manuscript pages. Faster-paced fiction has shorter scenes. Slower-paced fiction has longer scenes. Choose the scene length that works for you.

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## Step 10: Write Your Novel

You now have a well-structured story planned. The story has a good hook. It has a sound Three-Act Structure. It has a number of deep, well-motivated characters. It has a complete list of scenes, and each scene has a strong conflict that will drive the story.

At this point, you are frothing at the mouth in your eagerness to write your novel.

Do so.

For each scene in your scene list, read everything you've planned for the scene and then just start typing.

For a Snowflaker, this is the joy of fiction—writing the first draft of a novel that you already know is going to be a great story.

## Closing Thoughts

Remember that not everybody is a Snowflaker, and that's okay. Some people *must* write seat-of-the-pants. Some people *must* write a synopsis. Some people have other creative paradigms.

What matters is that you find a way that works well for you, so that you can write the first draft of your novel.

If the Snowflake Method works for you, then use it and be happy.

If only a few parts of it work for you, then use those and be happy.

If none of it works for you, then find some other method and be happy.

The Snowflake Method is nothing more nor less than the method that works best for me in writing fiction. If you can use it to guide your creativity as you write a powerful story, then I'll be thrilled.

I first posted my Snowflake article on my website in early 2003. In the years since, that page has been viewed more than 3.9 million times. I've heard from untold numbers of writers who've found it helpful. I would guess that there are tens of thousands of novelists around the world who use it.

I wish you the best of luck in your writing career, no matter what methods you use.

Have fun!

Randy Ingermanson ("the Snowflake Guy")

May 2014

P.S. If you find the Snowflake Method useful in writing your novel, I'd love to hear from you. Drop by my website at **AdvancedFic-**

**tionWriting.com** and send me an email via my Contact page. It always makes my day to hear about your writing successes.





# The Snowflake for This Book

I DESIGNED THE story for this book using the Snowflake Method. In this chapter, I'll show you my design. You'll note that the Snowflake here is not quite in sync with the final story. That's fine. The point of the Snowflake Method is to get the book written. Your story will evolve as you write it. Don't feel bound to your design.

I created this chapter using my software Snowflake Pro and then exported it as a Word document. I tweaked the format to be suitable for a book and made a few changes in final editing. Because the story is so short, I skipped the long synopsis step, since that seemed to be overkill. It's important to adapt the Snowflake Method to the needs of your book.

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## Book Info

Title: How To Write a Novel Using the Snowflake Method

Genre: Business Parable

Target Length: 40,000 words

Target Reader: A fiction writer who wants to write a novel and doesn't know how to get started.

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## Author Info

Name: Randy Ingermanson

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## Step 1: One-Sentence Summary

A young woman has an impractical dream to write a novel, but she fears that other people won't like her writing.

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## Step 2: One-Paragraph Summary

Goldilocks has always wanted to write a novel, but everyone in her family told her it was "impractical," so she put off her dream until her children started school. She begins taking classes at a writing conference, and Baby Bear invites her to try the Snowflake Method, but then he's gunned down in cold blood by the Big Bad Wolf. Goldilocks begins using the Snowflake Method, but when she creates a sympathetic villain, Little Pig tells her she's ruined her story. She goes to lunch with the Big Bad Wolf and soon realizes that he is a wonderful person with a tough exterior, and she really wants him to be her agent, but then he's arrested for the murder of Little Pig. Goldilocks finds the proof that he's innocent, and the real murderer tries to kill her, but she disables him with pepper spray and the Big Bad Wolf is freed.

## Step 3: Character Sheets

### Goldilocks

- Role: Heroine/villain (she is her own worst enemy)
- Values:
  - Nothing is more important than doing what you love.
  - Nothing is more important than making sure other people think well of you.
  - Nothing is more important than doing the right thing.
- Ambition: To be a great novelist.
- Goal: To write the first draft of her novel.
- Conflict: She doesn't know how to get started because she's afraid that she's not a good novelist and she has a hard time worrying about what people will think of her.
- Epiphany: She learns to trust her own instincts as a storyteller.
- One-Sentence Summary: A young woman has an impractical dream to write a novel, but she fears that other people won't like her writing.
- One-Paragraph Summary: Goldilocks has always wanted to write a novel, but everyone in her family told her it was "impractical," so she put off her dream until her children started school. She begins taking classes at a writing conference, and Baby Bear invites her to try the Snowflake Method, but then he's gunned down in cold blood by the Big Bad Wolf. Goldilocks begins using the Snowflake Method, but then when she creates a sympathetic villain, Little Pig tells her she's ruined her story. She goes to lunch with the Big Bad Wolf and soon realizes that he is a wonderful person who puts on a tough exterior, and she really wants him to be her agent, but then he's arrested for the murder of Little Pig. Goldilocks finds the proof

that he's innocent, and the real murderer tries to kill her, but she disables him with pepper spray and the Big Bad Wolf is freed.

## Baby Bear

- Role: Mentor
- Values:
  - Nothing is more important than the truth.
  - Nothing is more important than writing well.
  - Nothing is more important than fostering talent.
- Ambition: To be the best fiction teacher in the world.
- Goal: To teach Goldilocks how to plan her novel before she writes it.
- Conflict: Goldilocks has irrational fears that she has no talent as a writer.
- Epiphany: <No epiphany defined yet>
- One-Sentence Summary: A young bear must teach a class of wannabe writers how to become professional novelists, but his most talented student has no confidence in her writing, and his agent friend keeps alienating people.
- One-Paragraph Summary: Baby Bear invites his friend the Big Bad Wolf to help him out at a writing conference. Goldilocks is doing well, and it looks like she has talent, but she has a tiff with the Big Bad Wolf. Once that's resolved, Baby Bear pushes Goldilocks to improve her villain, but then Little Pig almost convinces her that she's all wrong. Just as Goldilocks is getting some confidence in herself, the Big Bad Wolf murders Little Pig, and Goldilocks takes up the lost cause of trying to prove he's innocent. But Goldilocks is right and the wolf is innocent, vindicating Baby Bear's judgment of both of them.

## Big Bad Wolf

- Role: Mentor
- Values:
  - Nothing is more important than making something big out of your life.
  - Nothing is more important than being true to yourself.
  - Nothing is more important than the way of nonviolence.
  - Nothing is more important than honor.
- Ambition: To be the world's greatest literary agent.
- Goal: To find a new novelist he can turn into a superstar.
- Conflict: Most novelists just don't want to work hard enough to excel at their craft.
- Epiphany: <No epiphany defined yet>
- One-Sentence Summary: A young and hungry wolf is searching for the writer of the Next Big Thing, but he's got a bad reputation and people are afraid of him.
- One-Paragraph Summary: The Big Bad Wolf was framed for the murder of two pigs at the age of nineteen and sent to prison, where he was eventually paroled. Now he's a rising star literary agent and has come to the conference looking for talent, but his straight talk alienates Goldilocks. Little Pig is at the conference and is trying to make things difficult for the Big Bad Wolf. When Little Pig tries to lure away Goldilocks from her real calling, the Big Bad Wolf tells him off, and then is arrested an hour later when Little Pig is murdered. Goldilocks proves the Big Bad Wolf is innocent and he is freed.

## Little Pig

- Role: Antagonistic friend, murder victim in secondary storyline
- Values:
  - Nothing is more important than money.

- Nothing is more important than survival.
- Nothing is more important than being famous.
- Ambition: Become a famous novelist, if he doesn't have to work too hard.
- Goal: Take a class in fiction writing and figure out the shortcuts to getting published, or else hire somebody to do the parts he doesn't like.
- Conflict: Writing is harder than he had thought, and he really would rather pay somebody else to do the hard stuff.
- Epiphany: <No epiphany defined yet>
- One-Sentence Summary: A wealthy business-pig takes a course in fiction writing because he thinks it should be a piece of cake to write a best-selling novel.
- One-Paragraph Summary: Little Pig has had a very successful career in business and is now looking to retire and write brilliant, stupendous fiction—a heartbreaking work of staggering genius. When he learns that it's harder than it looks, he tries to find a coauthor, but nobody is interested. He then asks Goldilocks for her help, but the Big Bad Wolf intervenes and tells Little Pig off. Little Pig's nephew has been trying to get a job from him without success, and seeks him out at the conference. Tiny Pig murders Little Pig and frames the Big Bad Wolf, but is caught by Goldilocks when she proves that the Big Bad Wolf is innocent.

### **Tiny Pig**

- Role: Minor character, villain of secondary storyline
- Values:
  - Nothing is more important than having a good time.
  - Nothing is more important than being wealthy.
  - Nothing is more important than having loads of friends.

- **Ambition:** To be a wealthy and honored pig in the community without having to work hard.
- **Goal:** To get a cushy job with his uncle, Little Pig, who runs a large corporation.
- **Conflict:** Little Pig is about to retire and doesn't want to give Tiny Pig a job because he's lazy. Then Tiny learns that his uncle murdered his father.
- **Epiphany:** <No epiphany defined yet>
- **One-Sentence Summary:** A young, lazy pig tries to persuade his stuffy, rich uncle to give him a cushy job that won't require any work.
- **One-Paragraph Summary:** Tiny Pig has had a successful college career getting drunk and chasing sorority girls, but his father is dead and his mother doesn't care about him and his trust fund has run out, and now he's going to have to sell off stock to stay afloat. Tiny Pig goes to his uncle and asks for a cushy job, but Little Pig is about to retire and, in any event, wouldn't give him a handout. Tiny Pig realizes that his uncle killed his father, and he knows that he stands to inherit everything, so he finds somebody to make up an injection that will paralyze his uncle so he can be killed. Tiny Pig murders Little Pig and frames the Big Bad Wolf, but then finds that Goldilocks is trying to prove Wolf's innocence. Tiny has a backup injection and tries to kill Goldilocks, but she sprays him with pepper and Robin Hood arrests him.

### **Mother Hubbard**

- **Role:** Friend
- **Values:**
  - Nothing is more important than having a full cupboard.
  - Nothing is more important than family.



- Ambition: Maybe write a story someday and become rich.
- Goal: Write a novel based on her personal experience with a bare cupboard.
- Conflict: She just doesn't have much story.
- Epiphany: She realizes that she doesn't want to be a novelist, she just wants to be rich.
- One-Sentence Summary: An old woman decides to make a quick buck telling her personal experience as a poor widow in novel form.
- One-Paragraph Summary: <No one-paragraph summary defined yet>

### **Robin Hood**

- Role: Friend
- Values:
  - Nothing is more important than freedom.
  - Nothing is more important than tweaking the nose of the Sheriff of Nottingham.
- Ambition: Live a life of adventure.
- Goal: Write a story about his amazing life as an outlaw.
- Conflict: He is pretty shallow and doesn't really want to work hard.
- Epiphany: <No epiphany defined yet>
- One-Sentence Summary: <No one-sentence summary defined yet>
- One-Paragraph Summary: <No one-paragraph summary defined yet>

### **Papa Bear**

- Role: Minor character

- Values: <No values defined yet>
- Ambition: To teach his methods of fiction writing.
- Goal: To teach how to outline a novel to young writers at a conference.
- Conflict: <No conflict defined yet>
- Epiphany: <No epiphany defined yet>
- One-Sentence Summary: <No one-sentence summary defined yet>
- One-Paragraph Summary: <No one-paragraph summary defined yet>

### **Mama Bear**

- Role: Minor character
- Values: <No values defined yet>
- Ambition: To teach her methods of fiction writing.
- Goal: To teach how to write “organically” to young writers at a conference.
- Conflict: <No conflict defined yet>
- Epiphany: <No epiphany defined yet>
- One-Sentence Summary: <No one-sentence summary defined yet>
- One-Paragraph Summary: <No one-paragraph summary defined yet>

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## **Step 4: Short Synopsis**

Goldilocks has always wanted to write a novel, but everyone in her family told her it was “impractical,” so she put off her dream until her children started school. When she decides to take classes at a writing conference, she first tries Papa Bear’s outlining approach, but she finds it too hard for her. Then she tries Mama Bear’s “organic”

method, but she finds it too soft and squishy. Finally, she goes to Baby Bear's course on the Snowflake Method. It sounds good, but then Little Pig calculates that it will take forever to write her novel at the rate she's going. Goldilocks doesn't know what to think. She's wavering, and then the Big Bad Wolf walks into the classroom and guns down Baby Bear in cold blood.

Goldilocks is furious and attacks the Big Bad Wolf. Baby Bear jumps up and explains that he isn't dead, that it was just a stunt to show the importance of using disasters at the breakpoints between acts. Goldilocks sees how valuable the Three-Disaster Structure can be, and she whips out a one-paragraph summary that has the class breathless. However, when she begins doing her character sheets, she focuses on her hero and heroine and gives the villain short shrift. Little Pig wants to write an autobiographical novel and came to the conference to team up with an author who will do the hard work. Goldilocks produces an excellent one-page synopsis, and the Big Bad Wolf tells her she's showing some talent and invites her to lunch. In the next session, the wolf has disappeared, and Baby Bear asks to see Goldilocks's character synopses and tells her that her villain is two-dimensional. Goldilocks makes another try, and this time her villain is more believable, but Little Pig sneers that she's not going to impress the Big Bad Wolf with a villain like that.

Goldilocks goes to lunch, terrified of what the Big Bad Wolf will say. Will he sneer at her like Little Pig did? Will she lose her chance with the big-shot literary agent? But she decides that she must stop worrying what other people think. She talks to the Big Bad Wolf about her novel and then shows him her character synopses, and he starts crying. He tells her that it's hard to be the villain. People don't understand you and they think you're evil. He tells his story about how, as a young wolf, he was framed for the murder of two pigs. He served time in prison, and nobody ever believed he was innocent.

Goldilocks sees that he has a soft and kind heart, and she desperately wants him to be her agent. After lunch, Goldilocks complains to Baby Bear that she now has to backtrack. He explains why that's normal and how the Snowflake Method encourages you to backtrack early, before you have a lot written. The next morning, Baby Bear teaches how to write a long synopsis. Little Pig pressures Goldilocks to help him with his story, and the Big Bad Wolf tells him off. Little Pig stalks out in a rage. Next, Baby Bear puts Goldilocks on the hot seat to help her develop her character bibles. The Big Bad Wolf has curled up in a back corner and gone to sleep. Baby Bear grills Goldilocks for quite a while, and a photographer comes in to take pictures. Nobody notices when the Big Bad Wolf leaves. But they all notice the wail of sirens in the background. Baby Bear goes to investigate and learns that Little Pig has been murdered. Only then does everyone see that the Big Bad Wolf is gone.

They all go out to see what's happened. The police have arrested the Big Bad Wolf, and Papa Bear is explaining how he discovered the body of Little Pig and then caught the Big Bad Wolf washing his hands in the men's room and arrested him and called the police. It's clear to everybody that the Big Bad Wolf is the murderer. Goldilocks visits him in jail, and he insists he's innocent—that he's been framed again. She believes him and spends the evening trying to figure out how to clear his name, but gets nowhere. She finally does her homework very late that night and staggers into class the next morning. Baby Bear teaches on the subject of scene lists, and he explains how to do one. When he mentions time stamps, Goldilocks gets very excited and goes rushing out. She finds Papa Bear and gets the receipt for his coffee. She finds the photographer's camera and steals it. She goes to a quiet spot in the coffee shop patio and looks at the pictures. Tiny Pig, the nephew of the murdered Little Pig, shows up and joins her. They find a photo of the Big Bad Wolf in class sleeping

and the time stamp proves he is innocent. Tiny Pig pulls out a syringe and tries to inject Goldilocks. She sprays him with pepper, and Robin Hood arrives to help. Tiny Pig is arrested, Goldilocks is a hero, and the Big Bad Wolf is set free. That afternoon, Baby Bear gets Goldilocks to describe what happened. She tells about her Goal-Conflict-Setback and her Reaction-Dilemma-Decision. Baby Bear explains how those work and tells her she needs to sketch out her scenes in advance using those patterns. Once she's done that, she can start writing her novel. Goldilocks goes home and maps out scene 1 of her novel. Then she starts writing, and the words come very smoothly and easily. Goldilocks is very happy.

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## Step 5: Character Synopses

### Goldilocks:

Goldilocks was a smart kid. She learned to read before she went to kindergarten, and she always had her nose in a book. When she was eight years old, she had a traumatic experience when she got lost on a walk in the woods. She came to the house of three bears and tasted their porridge, sat in their chairs, and slept in their beds. She escaped when the bears came home. Goldilocks put it all behind her, but the incident was traumatic enough that she developed an unhealthy fear of what other people think of her. So she has spent her life trying to make other people happy.

When Goldilocks started school, she loved writing stories. She won a writing contest in grade school and thought she might like to be an author someday. But when she started high school, her parents made it clear that they wanted her to do something serious when she grew up. They considered writing fiction a silly and childish pursuit,

and told her that she needed to study something “practical” that would help her earn a living.

So Goldilocks studied marketing in college, and graduated with a degree that her parents thought was practical. She got a job and then soon got married. A year after getting married, she got pregnant with the first of two children, and she quit her job to focus on them. She had a daughter and son and spent several happy years with them. When the youngest started kindergarten, Goldilocks realized that she had now been out of the job force for nearly eight years and her skills were rusty. She could get an entry-level job at just above minimum wage. But the thought of doing more marketing for a company she didn’t care about made her break out in hives. Her husband was earning a good income, and they didn’t need the money. But she desperately wanted to do something useful with her life.

She decided to do something dreadfully impractical—she was going to write a novel like the ones she often read. But she quickly found that she had no idea how to get started. When she opened her word processor, the empty page stared at her and she had a terrible fear of getting started on the wrong track. She already felt like she was far behind, and she couldn’t bear the thought of spending years of her life working on a manuscript that was unsaleable.

So she decided to go to a writing conference and see if she could quickly get up to speed on the task of writing a novel.

### **Baby Bear:**

Baby Bear is a young bear in his twenties who grew up in a home of writers. Both parents, Papa Bear and Mama Bear, are writers and teachers on the craft of fiction writing. Writing is in Baby Bear’s blood.

Papa Bear is an outliner and Mama Bear is a seat-of-the-pantser. Neither of those approaches works for Baby Bear. He loves the Snowflake Method because it works for him.

He's now been teaching for a few years and is starting to get good as a teacher. At this conference, he wants to make a bit of a splash, but his first session isn't scheduled until late on the first day of the conference. He knows that people will go to hear Papa Bear and Mama Bear teach their methods first. He hopes that writers who find that these methods don't work for them may find the Snowflake Method better.

Baby Bear convinces a well-known literary agent, the Big Bad Wolf, to barge in on his class and fire a gun loaded with blanks at him. The purpose is to show his students what a disaster looks like. The stunt works better than he had expected, because it causes Goldilocks to get into a fight with the Big Bad Wolf.

Baby Bear sees a lot of potential in Goldilocks. On the surface, she looks like an airhead, but when he pushes her, she does the hard work of improving her one-sentence summary and her one-paragraph summary. When she begins work on her characters, it's clear that her hero and heroine are going to be fairly good, but her villain is a horrible two-dimensional caricature. Baby Bear wrestles with how to get her to do better, but no solution comes to mind.

When Goldilocks expands out her one-paragraph summary to a full page, it reads pretty well. Goldilocks doesn't like her villain very much, so she is not putting in the effort she needs on him. When she reads her character synopses, it's clear that the villain needs more work. Goldilocks makes a try at improving her villain, but Little Pig sneers that she's made him too soft and boring, and he claims that the Big Bad Wolf is going to hate her new villain. Goldilocks is wavering again. Baby Bear wants to tell her that she needs to focus on

writing well, not on impressing agents or editors, but he realizes that she has to figure this out for herself.

After her lunch with the Big Bad Wolf, Goldilocks is showing new strength as a writer. She is no longer worried about what anyone thinks about her, and she is making good progress on her one-page synopsis and her character bibles. However, Little Pig is trying to hire a writer to help him, and he keeps bothering Goldilocks. The Big Bad Wolf tells him off, and Little Pig gets angry and stalks out.

Baby Bear puts Goldilocks on the hot seat and doesn't notice when the Big Bad Wolf leaves. But he does hear the sirens, and when he gets word that Little Pig has been murdered and the Big Bad Wolf has been arrested, he is very upset. He is responsible for the Big Bad Wolf coming to the conference, and now he's horrified that his kindness has turned into murder.

### **Big Bad Wolf:**

The Big Bad Wolf grew up in a rough neighborhood. As a juvenile, he saw his own uncle killed by a lynch mob who were angry at the murder of Little Red's grandmother. At the age of nineteen, he was framed for the murder of two pigs. All the Big Bad Wolf remembers is that he slept for a full day, and woke up the next day accused of murder. He had no explanation and no alibi, so he was convicted and served six years in prison.

He spent his time reading in the library and came out of prison determined to make something of himself. He worked in a literary agency for a couple of years and learned the industry and then hung up a shingle on his own and started taking clients. Authors were eager to sign on with him, because they figured he'd be a tough negotiator. And he was, because editors feared him.

The Big Bad Wolf wants to be the most successful agent in the business, and he's well on his way, but clouds are still hanging over



him. There are people who won't ever forget that he did hard time in prison. For them, he's a dishonest scoundrel, a liar, a thief, and a murderer. And he can't see any way to live that down. One of the few people willing to give him a chance is Baby Bear, who likes him for his skill and literary judgment and sees past his rough edges.

When he meets Goldilocks, he's happy to see what a talented writer she is. She's got ideas and she's teachable. The only bad thing at the conference is that Little Pig is there, very full of himself and acting like he can buy his way to a position as a big-shot author, just because he's a wealthy tycoon. The Big Bad Wolf has words with Little Pig, and even threatens him with becoming lunch. This is stupid, and Big Bad Wolf knows it, but seeing Little Pig reminds him of the years he lost in prison.

The Big Bad Wolf has a nice dinner with Goldilocks and does his best to encourage her. She's making rapid progress, but he can't sell her work without a full proposal, which would include a longer synopsis. She'll also need some sample chapters, and preferably the full manuscript. The next day in class, the Big Bad Wolf takes a nap in the back corner. When he wakes up, Goldilocks is in the hot seat. The Big Bad Wolf tiptoes out to go to the men's room. While he's washing his hands, Papa Bear bursts in and accuses him of murdering Little Pig.

### **Little Pig:**

Little Pig is a wealthy business-pig who is ready to retire. He imagines that he could be a famous author, and it just seems reasonable that he ought to be able to buy his way into a book contract.

Little Pig grew up poor, but he started a business with his two brothers when they were young. The business grew and grew, but Little Pig found his brothers annoying. They were lazy and old-fashioned, and they were holding back the company's growth. Little

Pig felt certain that as long as they were in the company, it would never reach its potential. They were, in fact, robbing him of the success that was due him. He made an offer to buy them out, but they both refused.

So Little Pig made a sleeping potion, injected it into the Big Bad Wolf while he slept, murdered his brothers late at night in their houses, and left wolf prints all over. The Big Bad Wolf was arrested, and with no alibi, he was convicted. Now he's out of prison, but Little Pig knows that the wolf has no suspicions of him, so he's safe.

Little Pig comes to the conference with his idea for a novel. Papa Bear and Mama Bear are no help, so he goes to Baby Bear's classes. But Baby Bear keeps droning on about his Snowflake Method, which Little Pig finds very pedestrian. It sounds far too much like work. Why can't he just be creative and then hire out the details, as he always has in business?

But Baby Bear isn't having any of that, and the Big Bad Wolf keeps making fun of him. Little Pig gets more and more angry. The establishment is apparently stacked against him, and his money is no good for helping him get published. Finally, in a rage, he stalks out of class and goes to get a latte at the coffee shop. His nephew, Tiny Pig, texts him asking where he is. Tiny Pig was due to fly in tomorrow, but he's apparently in town already.

Little Pig tells him he's in the back patio of the coffee shop. Tiny Pig arrives and asks him about the job they had discussed a couple of weeks ago. Little Pig sneers and tells him he'd be better off going back to school and getting a real education instead of chasing sorority girls and getting drunk. Tiny Pig injects him with a paralyzing drug. Little Pig collapses to the ground, frozen. He watches while Tiny Pig makes wolf prints all around him and then slits his throat.

Little Pig's last thought as consciousness fades is that he's been hit by a speeding karma.

**Tiny Pig:**

Tiny Pig is a trust fund brat. His father was murdered by the Big Bad Wolf and his mother is a socialite who has remarried and doesn't care much about him. Tiny Pig went to college and wasted all his time chasing sorority girls and getting drunk. Once he reached the age of twenty-one, he got full access to his trust fund and blew through the money incredibly fast. Now he's nearly broke, and thinks that the best thing to do is get a cushy job working for his uncle.

But his uncle, Little Pig, is about to retire. He refuses to help Tiny Pig get a job. Instead, he tells Tiny to go back to college and get a real education and then get an honest job and work his way up. But Little Pig lets slip some information about the death of Tiny's father. Tiny puts things together and realizes that Little Pig killed his father. He decides to kill his uncle, partly for revenge and partly so he can inherit his wealth.

Tiny gets a potion that paralyzes people and tracks down his uncle at the coffee shop. He injects him with the potion and puts wolf tracks all around him and then kills him.

His plan works. The Big Bad Wolf is arrested for the murder, and Tiny stands to inherit all of his money. But when Goldilocks finds proof that the Big Bad Wolf is innocent, Tiny has to act. He has an extra syringe, which he had made as a backup in case the first wasn't enough to disable his uncle. He tries to inject Goldilocks with the potion so he can kill her, but she sprays him with pepper. Robin Hood helps subdue him and Goldilocks calls the cops, and Tiny is hauled off to prison, where he soon confesses to his crime.

**Mother Hubbard:**

Mother Hubbard is a poor widow who wants to get rich by writing a novel. She is fixated on what an interesting life she's had. But all that has ever happened to her is that she goes to her cupboard every day and it's bare.

Mother Hubbard is writing a novel about a poor widow exactly like herself. She does not want to write a romance, in which the widow finds a rich husband. She is not interested in writing a thriller or a mystery. She wants a slice-of-life story about herself.

Baby Bear is not much impressed with her story, and Mother Hubbard can't imagine why. She hates the arrogant and overbearing Little Pig, and she's intimidated by the Big Bad Wolf. She does like Goldilocks, although the dear girl seems to live in a fantasy world.

**Robin Hood:**

Robin Hood is a happy young man who lives in Sherwood Forest with his band of merry outlaws, feasting on poached deer and outwitting the Sheriff of Nottingham. He likes nothing more than a party that lasts all weekend, a huge barrel of ale, and swarms of willing wenches.

Robin Hood would like to write a novel, a series of episodes based on his own life. He's not a very hard worker, and when he goes to the writing conference to learn how it's done, he realizes that this is beyond his skill.

He can't help admiring Goldilocks. She's a hard worker and has a fascinating story. And she's quite a good-looking wench, although just a bit snooty. Robin Hood does not like Little Pig at all, and he finds the Big Bad Wolf a bit obnoxious.

When Little Pig is killed, Robin Hood isn't sad. When the Big Bad Wolf is arrested, Robin Hood isn't surprised. But when Goldilocks develops an unhealthy obsession to clear the Big Bad Wolf,

Robin Hood is concerned. Wench shouldn't take life so seriously. He tries to talk reason to her, but she gets angry at him and tells him that she doesn't like to be called a wench. Imagine that! She is one weird wench.

Robin Hood is not the kind of guy to let a wench get away without a pursuit, so he keeps an eye on her. When he sees her going to the coffee shop patio, he hangs out near the conference center, waiting for her to come back so he can talk to her. He sees Tiny Pig go to the back patio, but can't see or hear what goes on back there. But when he hears Goldilocks screaming for help, he's there in a flash, with an arrow nocked. He helps arrest Tiny Pig and hopes Goldilocks will thank him in the way any red-blooded guy wants to be thanked by a lovely wench.

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## Step 6: Long Synopsis

This story was too short to need a long synopsis. The short synopsis was enough to allow me to create the scene list in step 8, so I skipped this step.

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## Step 7: Character Charts

### Goldilocks

- Age: 30
- Height: 5'5"
- Weight: 115 pounds
- Ethnic heritage: Northern European
- Color of hair: Blonde
- Color of eyes: Blue
- Personality type: Amiable driver

- Hobbies: Reading, writing
- Favorite books: Goldilocks likes exciting thrillers with strong romantic storylines. She's a big fan of Ken Follett and Jack Higgins.
- Favorite movies: Casablanca
- Description of home: She lives in a three-bedroom house in the suburbs, about ten years old. She has a large kitchen with an island in the middle and marble counters.
- Educational background: She went to college and got a degree in marketing.
- Work experience: She worked for a year or two after college and before she had children, but she's been unemployed for about eight years and her job prospects are weak.
- Family: She is married with a daughter in grade school and a son in kindergarten.
- Worst childhood memory: She once got lost on a walk in the woods. When she came to a cabin, she went in and helped herself to some porridge. She broke some of the furniture and then fell asleep on a bed. When she woke up, three bears were in the house. She ran away, screaming, badly traumatized. Her parents were terribly disappointed in her and have told her all her life that she could have done better. She has an irrational fear of what other people will think.
- Strongest character trait: Goldilocks is smart and energetic, and when she has things to do, she gets them done.
- Weakest character trait: She's afraid of what other people will think of her, and this hamstringing her.
- Greatest hope: To write a novel that everybody will love.
- Deepest fear: To write a novel that everybody will hate.
- How character sees self: She lacks self-confidence and doesn't realize how talented she actually is.

- How others see character: They see her as smart and organized, with an endearing lack of self-confidence.
- How character will change: Goldilocks will develop the self-confidence to trust her own instincts as a writer.

### **Baby Bear**

- Age: 29
- Height: 3'2"
- Weight: 200 pounds
- Ethnic heritage: Bear
- Color of eyes: Brown
- Color of hair: Brown
- Physical description: Baby Bear is a small bear.
- Style of dressing: Wears fur
- Sense of humor: Playful and a bit of a prankster
- Personality type: Analytic amiable
- Hobbies: Writing
- Favorite books: A fan of the classic fairy tales. He reads widely in all categories, and likes suspense and fantasy and YA.
- Favorite movies: Pride and Prejudice
- Description of home: A small cottage in the woods, which he grew up in.
- Educational background: He is smarter than your average bear, and got his degree in creative writing.
- Work experience: Writes fiction and teaches fiction.
- Family: The only son of Papa Bear and Mama Bear.
- Male friends: His childhood friend is the Big Bad Wolf, who has a criminal record but seems to have reformed. However, the Big Bad Wolf still insists he didn't kill those pigs, and Baby Bear thinks he should just come clean. But he had an exemplary rec-

ord in prison and is a good agent, and Baby Bear wants to give him a second chance.

- Worst childhood memory: He went out for a walk one day as a cub and returned home to find his food eaten, his chair broken, and his bed slept in by a blonde human child who shrieked loudly and ran away. Baby Bear has dreamed for years of finding the girl and bringing her to justice.
- Strongest character trait: Much smarter than your average bear.
- Weakest character trait: Loyal to a fault. He grew up knowing the Big Bad Wolf and has stood by him, even after he went to prison and was clearly guilty.
- Greatest hope: To be a great novelist himself someday, and not just a famous teacher of fiction.
- Deepest fear: That none of his students will ever be any good.
- How character sees self: A smart bear who knows great fiction and knows how to teach it.
- How others see character: A great teacher and mentor.

### **Big Bad Wolf**

- Age: 29
- Height: 6'0"
- Weight: 180 pounds
- Ethnic heritage: Wolf
- Color of hair: Gray
- Color of eyes: Black
- Physical description: He is a huge wolf, with intense black eyes that look right through you. He has gray fur and sharp canines and he worked out a lot in prison, so he is incredibly well muscled.
- Style of dressing: Wears fur



- Sense of humor: He has a sarcastic wit and doesn't hesitate to puncture an inflated ego. However, he's quite kind to people who lack self-esteem, and he'd never willingly hurt their feelings, but he does sometimes just because he's a bit insensitive.
- Personality type: Driver expressive
- Hobbies: Long-distance running, reading, eating (he especially likes pork ribs).
- Favorite music: Punk rock
- Favorite books: Thrillers, war novels, especially World War II novels, science fiction
- Favorite movies: Die Hard (all four)
- Favorite colors: Gray
- Description of home: Has a nice, cozy cave.
- Educational background: Self-taught while in prison. He read most of the prison library, and especially loves fiction.
- Work experience: He was framed for the murder of two pigs at the age of nineteen and sent to prison. He worked in the laundry and was paroled for good behavior. He worked in a literary agency for two years and has recently started his own agency, the Big Bad Wolf Literary Agency.
- Family: He comes from a pack of fiercely loyal wolves. However, none of them believe that he didn't kill the pigs, so he feels a bit uncomfortable with them. They're a violent bunch, and he's the quiet and studious one.
- Male friends: He grew up with Baby Bear, who maintained friendship with him while in prison. However, Baby Bear has never quite believed that he's innocent. Baby Bear insists that Big Bad Wolf "had your reasons for what you did."
- Female friends: Is dating a very nice she-wolf who has a booming career in real estate. Big Bad Wolf hopes something will come of it. Her family is a bit upset about his prison record, but

she finds him brooding and mysterious and is probably more attracted to him because of his dangerous reputation than for his actual personality.

- Enemies: Little Pig has always hated him for murdering his two brothers. It was Little Pig's weeping testimony on the witness stand that helped put Big Bad Wolf in prison.
- Worst childhood memory: His favorite uncle was lynched by a mob of angry woodsmen after having lunch with Little Red's grandmother. Big Bad Wolf knows his uncle was guilty, but even so, he feels that the woodsmen were way out of line and should have waited for the court to exact justice. Big Bad Wolf despises lynch mobs.
- One-line characterization: A dangerous-looking wolf with a soft heart.
- Strongest character trait: Speaks impulsively and sometimes uses frightening language because he tends to exaggerate.
- Weakest character trait: Tends to be too honest and forthright when giving his opinion, so he sometimes unknowingly hurts people's feelings.
- Greatest hope: He wants to discover fresh new talent among the younger generation of writers.
- Deepest fear: He fears that he will give in to the violent impulses of his wolfish nature.
- How character sees self: A friendly, engaging, intelligent, but highly misunderstood wolf.
- How others see character: A terrifying, sarcastic, unempathetic, dangerous wolf.

### **Little Pig**

- Age: 64
- Height: 4'3"

- Weight: 300 pounds
- Ethnic heritage: Pig
- Color of hair: Little Pig is bald.
- Color of eyes: Pink
- Physical description: He's a pig.
- Style of dressing: No clothes. Sometimes wears a black bow tie.
- Sense of humor: Little Pig is overly serious and never jokes.
- Personality type: Driver analytic
- Hobbies: He has an outstanding stamp collection, which he pays an assistant to keep up to date.
- Favorite music: A big fan of Wagner
- Favorite books: Any books on business management. How to Win Friends and Influence Enemies.
- Favorite movies: Documentaries
- Favorite colors: Pink
- Description of home: Little Pig once had a fine brick home that he built himself. Later, as his business took off, he moved into a mansion in a gated community that has its own golf course. He doesn't use most of the rooms, but he has a few servants who live there and keep the place up—a butler, a cook, and a housekeeper.
- Educational background: Harvard Business School
- Work experience: Little Pig started a business selling straw, sticks, and bricks early in life with his brothers. Later, they moved into building supplies and created a chain of stores that competes with Home Depot and Lowe's, but targets contractors, not do-it-yourselfers. They then branched out into pharmaceuticals, where they made a killing. Little Pig became CEO after the tragic murder of his brothers.
- Family: Little Pig's parents died many years ago, leaving him and his two brothers to fend for themselves. They began a busi-

ness together, and it grew rapidly. After the tragic murder of Little Pig's brothers, the business grew exponentially under his leadership. Little Pig never married, but one of his brothers left a wife and a son (Tiny Pig). Tiny Pig grew up affluent and is a spoiled brat.

- **Best friend:** Friends? Little Pig has no friends. But he has a lot of competitors.
- **Enemies:** Little Pig's only enemies were his brothers, who were ruining the family business. So Little Pig killed them and inherited the stock of one of them and got full control of the company. His nephew Tiny Pig has now grown up and has a one-third share in the company, which earns him some dividends, but that's not enough for him. He wants a cushy job that will pay a high salary, and Little Pig knows he's incompetent, so he refuses to give him any sort of position in the company. Tiny is faced with having to sell off stock to maintain his lifestyle. But Tiny stands to inherit from Little Pig, and when he figures out that Little Pig killed his father, he decides to kill two birds with one stone.
- **Best childhood memory:** Little Pig loved to wallow in the mud on long summer afternoons with his brothers when he was a small child.
- **Worst childhood memory:** Little Pig often heard terrifying tales as a child about the legendary Big Bad Wolf who huffed and puffed and blew down houses. Little Pig had nightmares about the Big Bad Wolf. When he finally met a wolf who was big and bad, it was an easy thing to use him as the fall guy for the murder of Little Pig's brothers.
- **One-line characterization:** Little Pig is a male chauvinist pig, a psychopath who has got where he is by stepping on the hands of

those below him on the ladder of success, and by pulling down those above.

- Strongest character trait: Little Pig always gets what he wants, because he thinks that everybody has a price and everybody can be bought.
- Weakest character trait: Little Pig lacks empathy and can't put himself inside the skin of anyone else. So he's completely unfit to be a novelist.
- Greatest hope: Little Pig wants to be famous as a captain of industry and a great novelist—a multitalented but humble self-made pig.
- Deepest fear: Little Pig is afraid that somebody will learn his deepest secret—that he killed his own brothers.
- Philosophy of life: Take what you can! Give nothing back!
- How character sees self: A self-made pig who pulled himself up by his own bootstraps and made a success from very humble beginnings.
- How others see character: An arrogant, self-absorbed, egotistical pig who thinks he can buy everything and everyone.
- How character will change: He'll be killed.

### **Tiny Pig**

- Age: 24
- Height: 3'8"
- Weight: 280 pounds
- Ethnic heritage: Pig
- Color of hair: Tiny is bald.
- Color of eyes: Pink
- Style of dressing: Pigs don't wear clothes. Tiny sometimes wears a nice sport jacket.

- Sense of humor: He loves frat-boy humor. Nothing is funnier than dumping a pitcher of beer on your best buddy while he's getting friendly with his girlfriend on the couch.
- Personality type: Expressive expressive
- Hobbies: Drinking, playing pool, gambling, chasing girls
- Favorite music: Hip-hop
- Favorite books: Tiny is pretty sure he's NEVER read a book.
- Favorite movies: *Animal House*—it's a documentary!
- Description of home: Tiny grew up in a luxurious mansion, compliments of his trust fund. Now that money is running low, he's scaled back to a very expensive apartment with all the good-ies.
- Educational background: Tiny skated through high school and college. He thinks he majored in business administration, but he's not actually sure.
- Work experience: Frankly, there just aren't a lot of job opportunities for kids from well-to-do families. Business owners tend to hate those types and only give jobs to impoverished kids willing to work for minimum wage. So Tiny has had to struggle against discrimination all his life and has never actually had a job. But he's looking, and he's quite sure that an upper-level management position in his uncle's business would be just the thing for him. But his uncle is being such a tightwad and keeps asking stupid questions like what can Tiny actually DO for the company.
- Family: Tiny's father was murdered when Tiny was a teenager, and the Big Bad Wolf was convicted. Tiny's mother was a wealthy socialite, much younger than his father, and she wasn't much fazed by the death of her husband. Tiny is an only child, and now that he's an adult, he doesn't keep much track of his mother anymore, except on holidays.

- Best friend: Tiny has just a huge raft of friends he knew in college. They had the absolute BEST time in their fraternity. Most of the guys have gotten jobs now or else are still in school trying to find themselves. Great guys, all of them, and Tiny was always free to give them money when they were in a pinch. But now he's in a pinch, and it's very strange, but none of his friends have anything to spare for him. The economy, you know.
- Strongest character trait: Tiny is very generous with his money. Always has been. He's also very gregarious and knows lots of people and loves to hang out with them at parties. He's extremely popular and is considered a success with the ladies.
- Weakest character trait: Tiny just doesn't like to work hard. He's TALENTED, you know, and talented people can get by without grinding it out.
- Greatest hope: Tiny wants to take over the company his father and uncles founded and become the next CEO. He hopes to become an industrial magnate and possibly go into politics someday.
- Deepest fear: Tiny is terrified of being poor and having to work hard. That's just not what talented pigs do, and it's way beneath him.
- Male friends: Too many to count. Everybody Tiny knew in college was his friend.
- Female friends: Too many to count. Every girl he knew in college was looking for a good time, and he was only too happy to give it to them.
- Enemies: Tiny can't think of a single person who hates him. Although his uncle, Little Pig, doesn't seem to appreciate his amazing talents, but that doesn't really count as an enemy. Tiny visited his uncle recently to ask for a job. At dinner, Little Pig let slip something that proved to Tiny that he murdered Tiny's fa-

ther. And Tiny realizes that if he kills Little Pig, he can not only avenge his father's death but also inherit the business and get the cushy job he wants.

- Best childhood memory: Tiny remembers the many great parties his parents used to throw when he was a small pig. Tiny would spy on the adults and sneak drinks of the punch and enjoy the atmosphere.
- Worst childhood memory: Tiny used to have to visit his grandparents on Thanksgiving and listen to long, boring stories about growing up poor and having to scabble for a living. Who would want to live like that?
- One-line characterization: Tiny believes he's the most talented person on the planet and that he deserves all the good things without having to work hard.
- How character sees self: A brilliant, gifted pig who's had some setbacks in life but has risen above those by the sheer force of talent.
- How others see character: A lazy trust-fund pig with an entitlement mentality and no work ethic at all.
- Philosophy of life: Life is great, so enjoy it, because you deserve it, you talented thing, you.

### **Mother Hubbard**

- Age: 75
- Height: 4'9"
- Weight: 150 pounds
- Ethnic heritage: A broad mix of all the traditional European ancestries that Americans have.
- Color of hair: Gray
- Color of eyes: Light blue



- Physical description: Mother Hubbard is a stooped but vigorous old woman with a gleam in her eye.
- Style of dressing: She wears long, dark dresses that sweep the floor. She wears her hair in a bun and has wire-framed glasses. She's afraid of being mugged, so she has a small pistol that she conceals in her apron.
- Sense of humor: Self-deprecating
- Personality type: Expressive amiable
- Hobbies: Cooking, sewing, ironing, dancing
- Favorite music: Big-band music from the '30s and '40s
- Favorite books: Fairy tales
- Favorite movies: The Wizard of Oz
- Favorite colors: Purple, gray
- Contents of purse or wallet: She doesn't have a purse, but her apron has plenty of pockets.
- Description of home: Alas, her home is pretty bare. It has a thin, worn carpet in the small living room. The kitchen has old linoleum and plain, unvarnished cabinets. The cupboard is also plain and unvarnished, and it's quite bare.
- Educational background: Mother Hubbard graduated from high school and got married. That was just what you DO back when she was young, and she doesn't see why these young girls want to go off and get schooling and wait years and years to get married and have babies, because it just doesn't make any SENSE.
- Work experience: None. Mother Hubbard has never worked outside the home. Her husband had a job years ago, but then he left her a widow. She has a small pension, and that's really all she needs.
- Family: Mother Hubbard is a widow with five children who have now all grown up and established their own homes. They

still care about her, but they're busy and she doesn't see much of them.

- Worst childhood memory: Mother Hubbard grew up in a poor family, and the cupboard was always bare.
- Greatest hope: Mother Hubbard hopes to become fabulously wealthy someday.
- Deepest fear: That the cupboard will always be bare.
- How character sees self: A poor old woman who has been cheated by life.
- How others see character: A poor old woman who is obsessed with bare cupboards.

### **Robin Hood**

- Age: 35
- Height: 6'0"
- Weight: 180
- Ethnic heritage: Saxon
- Color of hair: Golden
- Color of eyes: Blue
- Physical description: A good-looking young man who wears leather and carries his bow and arrow wherever he goes.
- Sense of humor: Happy and cheerful
- Personality type: Expressive driver
- Political party: He opposes the Sheriff of Nottingham and supports Richard the Lionhearted.
- Hobbies: Archery, drinking ale, chasing wenches
- Favorite music: Ale-drinking songs
- Favorite books: Books?
- Favorite colors: Gold and green
- Contents of purse or wallet: A few gold coins
- Description of home: He lives in a cave in Sherwood Forest.

- Educational background: None
- Work experience: Robin Hood has never worked. He poaches deer from the forest and steals from the rich and gives some of it to the poor, but a guy's got to live, so he keeps what he needs.
- Family: His merry band of outlaws are his family.
- Best friend: Little John
- Male friends: Little John, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlett, Much the Miller's Son
- Female friends: Maid Marian
- Enemies: The Sheriff of Nottingham is constantly trying to arrest Robin Hood.
- One-line characterization: An outlaw who lives by his archery skills.
- Greatest hope: He wants to live free.
- Deepest fear: He fears being captured and losing his freedom.
- Philosophy of life: Live free or die.
- How character sees self: The most fun-loving guy on the planet.
- How others see character: A weird guy who wears leather and carries a bow and arrows around EVERYWHERE.

### **Papa Bear**

<Nothing more>

### **Mama Bear**

<Nothing more>

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## **Step 8: Scene List**

1. Goldilocks starts her first novel and freezes. She can't figure out how to get started. So she decides to go to a conference.

2. Goldilocks takes her first class from Papa Bear and then tries outlining. But it doesn't work for her at all. It's too boring.
3. Goldilocks takes a class from Mama Bear and then tries "organic" writing. But that doesn't work either. It's too muddled.
4. Goldilocks is desperate. She sees a major track on the Snowflake Method and decides to take it.
5. Goldilocks joins a series of classes by Baby Bear, and he makes her volunteer to be an example and teaches her how to define her target audience.
6. Baby Bear pushes Goldilocks hard and finally gets her to write her one-sentence summary.
7. Baby Bear explains about the snowflake fractal and growing your story out bit by bit. Then the Big Bad Wolf shoots him dead.
8. Baby Bear explains the Three-Act Structure and helps Goldilocks write her one-paragraph summary.
9. Goldilocks learns about character Goals, Ambitions, and Values and puts together something for her main characters.
10. Goldilocks wins a prize for her one-page synopsis—lunch with the Big Bad Wolf.
11. Baby Bear tells Goldilocks that her villain is two-dimensional. She improves him quite a bit, but then Little Pig tells her that the wolf will hate her villain.
12. Goldilocks goes to lunch terrified of what the Big Bad Wolf will say, but he loves her villain and tells her about his own life.
13. Goldilocks takes Baby Bear to task because she has to backtrack, but he explains that backtracking is essential.
14. Baby Bear teaches how to write a long synopsis, and Little Pig leaves after Goldilocks turns down his request to help him and the Big Bad Wolf tells him off.

15. Baby Bear teaches on how to write a character bible while the wolf naps. Quite a bit later, they all hear sirens.
  16. Little Pig has been murdered and the Big Bad Wolf has been arrested for his murder.
  17. Goldilocks visits the wolf in prison and thinks he's innocent and vows to clear his name.
  18. Goldilocks can't think of a way to clear the wolf, so she does her homework and staggers to bed.
  19. Goldilocks learns about scene lists, and when Baby Bear mentions time stamps, she has a revelation.
  20. Goldilocks finds proof that the wolf is innocent. But when she shows it to Tiny Pig, he tries to kill her.
  21. Goldilocks is so terrified she can't scream, but finally manages to pepper spray Tiny Pig.
  22. Goldilocks explains everything to the class, and Baby Bear teaches on Goal-Conflict-Setback and Reaction-Dilemma-Decision and step 9 of the Snowflake.
  23. Goldilocks maps out scene 1 and starts writing, and the words come smoothly. She's writing her first draft, and she loves it!
  24. We summarize the ten steps of the Snowflake Method
  25. We see the Snowflake design for this book.
- 

## Step 9: Scene Details

- 1) Goldilocks starts her first novel and freezes. She can't figure out how to get started. So she decides to go to a conference.
  - POV: Goldilocks
  - Title: The Impractical Dream
  - Narrative summary on Goldilocks and her impractical dream to write a novel.
  - Goal: To write her first chapter.

- Conflict: She doesn't know how to get started, and she's afraid to start in the wrong direction.
- Setback: She only writes one word all day: "The."
- Reaction: Goldilocks cries.
- Dilemma: How to learn how to get started?
- Decision: Go to a writing conference and learn how to write a novel.

2) Goldilocks takes her first class from Papa Bear and then tries out outlining. But it doesn't work for her at all. It's too boring.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Goal: Take a class in outlining by Papa Bear.
- Conflict: She doesn't like outlining.
- Setback: She hates her novel, and she hasn't even started writing it yet.

3) Goldilocks takes a class from Mama Bear and then tries "organic" writing. But that doesn't work either. It's too muddled.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Goal: Take a class in "organic" writing by Mama Bear.
- Conflict: She already tried this, and it didn't work for her.
- Setback: She still has only one word: "The."

4) Goldilocks is desperate. She sees a major track on the Snowflake Method and decides to take it.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Reaction: Goldilocks feels desperate.
- Dilemma: Now what?
- Decision: Take a class in the Snowflake Method by Baby Bear.

5) Goldilocks joins a series of classes by Baby Bear, and he makes her volunteer to be an example and teaches her how to define her target audience.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Target Audience
- Goal: Learn how to write a novel.
- Conflict: Baby Bear makes Goldilocks sit in front of the class and define her target audience.
- Setback: She still doesn't know how to write her novel, and they've wasted all this time talking about boring marketing. Yuck!

6) Baby Bear pushes Goldilocks hard and finally gets her to write her one-sentence summary.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Story In One Sentence
- Goal: Learn the Snowflake Method
- Conflict: Baby Bear wants her whole story in less than twenty-five words! Ridiculous!
- Setback: She comes up with a great one-sentence summary, but she knows that isn't a whole novel.

7) Baby Bear explains about the snowflake fractal and growing your story out bit by bit. Then the Big Bad Wolf shoots him dead.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Creative Paradigm
- Goal: Figure out how to get from one small sentence to a whole novel.
- Conflict: Goldilocks doesn't believe that this is going to work for her. It sounds too simple, and writing a novel should be complicated and difficult.

- Setback: Baby Bear is murdered by the Big Bad Wolf.

8) Baby Bear explains the Three-Act Structure and helps Goldilocks write her one-paragraph summary.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: The Importance of Being Disastrous
- Reaction: Goldilocks is shocked, terrified, and furious.
- Dilemma: The Big Bad Wolf threatens her if she uses the Snowflake Method.
- Decision: She attacks him and then learns that it's all a big scam—Baby Bear isn't dead, and the wolf is his helper.
- Goal: Learn Three-Act Structure.
- Conflict: Goldilocks has a tough time getting it.
- Setback: She creates a nice summary paragraph, but it's feeling flat because it's all about plot, not characters.

9) Goldilocks learns about character Goals, Ambitions, and Values and puts together something for her main characters.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Nothing Is More Important Than Characters
- Goal: Create character sheets.
- Conflict: Goldilocks doesn't understand Goals, Ambitions, and Values.
- Setback: Goldilocks does all her character sheets except her villain's. Baby Bear must not have meant for her to waste time on the villain.

10) Goldilocks wins a prize for her one-page synopsis—lunch with the Big Bad Wolf.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Story in One Page



- Goal: Show Baby Bear what she's done.
- Conflict: Baby Bear suggests that her villain is a bit spotty, and the Big Bad Wolf argues with Goldilocks.
- Setback: Goldilocks wins a prize for her one-page synopsis—but it's lunch with the Big Bad Wolf!

11) Baby Bear tells Goldilocks that her villain is two-dimensional. She improves him quite a bit, but then Little Pig tells her that the wolf will hate her villain.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your People's Secret Stories
- Goal: Write character synopses for all her characters.
- Conflict: Goldilocks reluctantly agrees to work on her villain.
- Setback: Little Pig tells her she's ruined her villain by making him three-dimensional and the Big Bad Wolf is going to laugh at her.

12) Goldilocks goes to lunch terrified of what the Big Bad Wolf will say, but he loves her villain and tells her about his own life.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: The Second Disaster and Your Moral Premise
- Goal: Goldilocks just wants to get through lunch with the Big Bad Wolf, even though she's sure he's going to reject her.
- Conflict: The Big Bad Wolf loves it and tells her about his own life as a villain. He explains that her story finally has a Moral Premise.
- Setback: Goldilocks is pleased that he likes it, but now she's upset that she's going to have to do a lot of backtracking.

13) Goldilocks takes Baby Bear to task because she has to backtrack, but he explains that backtracking is essential.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Why Backtracking Is Good
- Goal: Take Baby Bear to task because the Snowflake isn't perfect on the first try and Goldilocks has to backtrack.
- Conflict: Baby Bear says backtracking is good.
- Setback: Some of the students leave because this is getting to be too much work.
- Reaction: Goldilocks is discouraged and tired.
- Dilemma: She would like to skate over her work if she's only going to have to come back to it later.
- Decision: She does her best and decides to talk to the Big Bad Wolf about being her agent.

14) Baby Bear teaches how to write a long synopsis, and Little Pig leaves after Goldilocks turns down his request to help him and the Big Bad Wolf tells him off.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Long Synopsis
- Goal: Goldilocks wants to ask the Big Bad Wolf to be her agent.
- Conflict: Goldilocks learns that she can't get a good agent without writing a synopsis, but the agent probably won't even read the synopsis closely. It sounds like wasted effort.
- Setback: Goldilocks is upset by the Big Bad Wolf's bad-tempered outburst at Little Pig, and now she's not sure he'd be the right agent for her.

15) Baby Bear teaches on how to write a character bible while the wolf naps. Quite a bit later, they all hear sirens.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Character Bible
- Goal: Goldilocks is eager to continue working on her characters.

- Conflict: Goldilocks really has a lot of research to do on her characters still that she hasn't dreamed of yet.
- Setback: A siren begins wailing outside, and only then does everyone notice that the Big Bad Wolf is gone.

16) Little Pig has been murdered, and the Big Bad Wolf has been arrested for his murder.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your Third Disaster
- Reaction: Everyone is shocked to learn that Little Pig has been murdered.
- Dilemma: The Big Bad Wolf has been arrested, and all the evidence is circumstantial, but it looks bad for him.
- Decision: Goldilocks can't believe the wolf is guilty and decides to go talk to him.

17) Goldilocks visits the wolf in prison and thinks he's innocent and vows to clear his name.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Goal: Get the wolf's story.
- Conflict: All the evidence points to his guilt. All Goldilocks has is her own faith in his essential goodness.
- Setback: The wolf has given up hope.

18) Goldilocks can't think of a way to clear the wolf, so she does her homework and staggers to bed.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Your List of Scenes
- Goal: Figure out how to clear the wolf.
- Conflict: She tries to handle his case like a story, with character synopses, but it's not working.

- Setback: She just doesn't have enough evidence.

19) Goldilocks learns about scene lists, and when Baby Bear mentions time stamps, she has a revelation.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Goal: Learn the next step in the Snowflake.
- Conflict: The first scene in Goldilocks's novel is not obvious. Whose POV should it be? And how much backstory should go into the scene?
- Setback: Baby Bear tells her about time stamps. This is actually not a setback, it's a rare victory, but only Goldilocks sees it yet. She goes running out of the room, even though Baby Bear says class isn't over yet.

20) Goldilocks finds proof that the wolf is innocent. But when she shows it to Tiny Pig, he tries to kill her.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Goal, Conflict, Setback
- Goal: Get the time stamps for yesterday's events.
- Conflict: Papa Bear doesn't want to help, but he finally digs out his coffee receipt. Goldilocks steals the camera.
- Setback: Goldilocks finds the proof that the Big Bad Wolf is innocent, and shows it to Tiny Pig. He pulls out a syringe.

21) Goldilocks is so terrified she can't scream, but finally manages to pepper spray Tiny Pig.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Reaction, Dilemma, Decision
- Reaction: Goldilocks is terrified.
- Dilemma: She can't run. She can't fight Tiny Pig. She can't hide.

- Decision: She pulls out her pepper spray and gives it to him right in the eyes.

22) Goldilocks explains everything to the class, and Baby Bear teaches on Goal-Conflict-Setback and Reaction-Dilemma-Decision and step 9 of the Snowflake.

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Planning Your Scenes
- Goal: Finish the workshop.
- Conflict: None. Goldilocks explains what she did, and Baby Bear explains how each step was part of a Proactive or Reactive Scene.
- Setback: They're almost out of time. Goldilocks feels horrible for hogging all the time.

23) Goldilocks maps out scene 1 and starts writing, and the words come smoothly. She's writing her first draft, and she loves it!

- POV: Goldilocks
- Title: Writing Your Novel
- Goldilocks sits down to write and begins typing, and the words just flow. She writes the first scene in a fury of words, and when she's done, she realizes that she's a fiction writer. She has a long way to go, but she knows that she can write her whole novel and it will be a good novel, well structured, with a strong theme that arises naturally out of the story. Goldilocks is very happy.

24) We summarize the ten steps of the Snowflake Method.

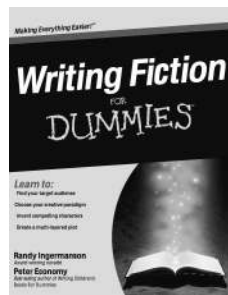
25) We see the Snowflake design for this book.

# Continue Learning...

Want to learn more about how to write fiction?

Take a look at my best-selling how-to guide, *Writing Fiction for Dummies*. Since its publication in 2009, this book has become one of the standard reference books on fiction writing. Learn how to:

- Organize your life and your writing.
- Write your first draft using the creative paradigm geared for you.
- Edit your manuscript to get agents and editors drooling.
- Find an agent and sell your manuscript to a publisher.



# How To Help the Author

**A note from Goldilocks:** “Word-of-mouth is the most powerful marketing force in the universe. If you enjoyed reading my adventures, I’d appreciate you rating this book and leaving a review. Even if you write only a sentence or two, it will help. Thank you! I appreciate you!”

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Randy Ingermanson got his Ph.D. in theoretical physics from the University of California at Berkeley. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis using the ideas in this book.

He's been applying his knowledge of math to make the world a better place ever since.

Randy is a bit like Goldilocks, a bit like Baby Bear, and a bit like the Big Bad Wolf. He desperately hopes he's not much like Little Pig, but you'd have to ask his friends.

Randy is the author of six award-winning novels and is well known around the world as "the Snowflake Guy." He runs the **Advanced Fiction Writing** web site, and publishes the free monthly **Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine**, a wildly popular e-mail newsletter on fiction writing. He also blogs when the spirit moves him, and he's the creator of **Snowflake Pro**, a software tool that makes the Snowflake Method fast, easy, and fun.

You can read all the unfortunate details about Randy and sign up for his e-zine and blog here:

**[www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com](http://www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com)**