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Stop, Drop and Roll: Adding the Crisis Scene

 0 Comments

You're at the 3/4 point in your novel and facing that all-important crisis scene. The Supreme Ordeal. The Black Moment. The Big Gloom. You know it's critical to the story's survival, and you want it to be the best it can be. Still, you're unsure of how to progress.

How does one go about writing a crisis scene, anyway? What does a confused writer need to know? It's as easy as "Stop, Drop and Roll!"

STOP!



- **STOP** the clock. Make the reader feel like time is standing still. Like they can't possibly breathe until you start the clock again.
- **STOP** the romance. There's a time to kiss...and a time to save the planet. It's time to save the planet.

- **STOP** the sunlight. It's time to cover your story in shadows.
- **STOP** the reader's heart. Leave him breathless and worried.
- **STOP** the POV character's chances of survival. Things have to look hopeless at this point in the story.
- **STOP** pretending the POV character's got it all together. Every flaw is now exposed and every hidden motive revealed.
- **STOP** the cheerful chatter. No time to sound uplifting or cheerful. The crisis scene calls for tense, sobering word choices.

DROP!

- **DROP** the plotline. You've been building, building, building. Now let it plummet.
- **DROP** your reader's hope. Make him think the story can't possibly work out.
- **DROP** your POV characters to a physical low.
- **DROP** your POV characters to an emotional low.

- **DROP** the lengthy narrative. Crisis scenes call for short, quick dialogue and very little narrative. Cut off words by using –em dashes. Leave off tags. Push aside descriptives. Cut to the chase.

ROLL!

- **ROLL** up your sleeves. Writing the crisis scene is tough work. You need to learn how to do it effectively.
 - **ROLL** up (tighten) the tension coil. Tighter! Tighter! Tighter!
 - **ROLL** over and play dead. Your character has to face death (death of a dream, death of a romance, death of hope, etc.) This isn't a physical death, of course, though it might look as if your primary POV character might face a literal death.
 - **ROLL** out the punches. Your character's going to have to come out swinging. **ROLL** out the sword! Your character needs to be armed and ready to do battle. **ROLL** the stone away from the cave. Resurrection day is coming!
 - **ROLL** toward the resolution. Everything has to turn out okay in the end.
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The next time you face a crisis scene in your book, just think of these three little words: Stop, Drop and Roll!"

By JThompson
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Fiction Lessons

Edit

← Editing: Show, Don't Tell!

The Role of C.O.N.F.L.I.C.T. →

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