**OUTLINING AND PLOTTING BASICS**

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Okay, let's talk plotting. How do you come up with a story?

Well, it helps to start with a premise. My 2021 young adult novel I'm Good and Other Lies began with me wondering what it would be like for a teen in a hugely dysfunctional family to be stuck with family members during Toronto's first Covid-19 lockdown. Playing the 'What if' game is a great idea/premise starter!

Once you have your premise, you can start building a plot/outlining. List your scenes. Yes, I know some of you are 'pantsers'--writers who go by the seat of your pants--but I've found, as an editor and as a writer, that outlining makes for a quicker, tighter draft. You don't have to be super detailed about it. I use a fairly skeletal outline because otherwise, I'm sick of the book before I start drafting!

For I'm Good, first I needed to show my main character Kelsey pre-pandemic, having difficulty at home and trying to get away from her folks whenever possible. My list also included scenes showing Kelsey working hard to get great marks and trying to save money from her new part-time job so she'd have a chance at getting out of town for university. I also showed Kelsey starting to make friends at her new school and that new part-time job. (Her family's moved because her mom's pill and alcohol addiction has decreased her earning power.)

That did it for Act I. Then I listed a scene announcing the lockdown.

My Act II scenes included Kelsey having trouble with online school, having an extra-terrible time at home with her parents, and then slipping into depression and substance use. (Those friendships she was starting to make in Act I didn't get a chance to bloom, leaving her without a support system.) Then I decided a terrible, climactic event should jolt everyone back to reality.

In the final act, I listed scenes showing Kelsey and her family clawing their way back to some semblance of normalcy.

Once I completed my list of main-plot scenes, I wove in subplot scenes. I wanted to have various pandemic experiences represented in the book; one I wove in was the tragic experience of Kelsey's best friend, giving that storyline its own proper beginning, middle and end, complete with rising tension, a climax and resolution.

Feel free to use the above as a plotting template/guide and Happy Outlining! (Note that there is plot/story and there is how to tell the story. You may want to start at a climactic moment and go back, or tell the story in some other unusual way!)