REVISION WORKBOOK

A second draft starts with knowing what the first draft got wrong.

This workbook is for the messy part after THE END.

Don't start by fixing commas. Start by figuring out whether the story itself works.

BEFORE YOU REVISE

The story I set out to write

In one sentence:

What is this story really about?

What should the reader feel by the end?

The three things I absolutely want to keep:

PASS ONE

THE STORY

Read your manuscript without editing it. Look at the story as a whole.

1. THE PREMISE

Can you still describe the story clearly?

My current premise:

Does the actual manuscript deliver on this premise?

□ Yes

□ Mostly

□ Not yet

What has changed since I first planned it?

2. THE PLOT

Write down the five biggest things that happen in your story.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now ask:

Does each event cause something else to happen?

Where does the story slow down?

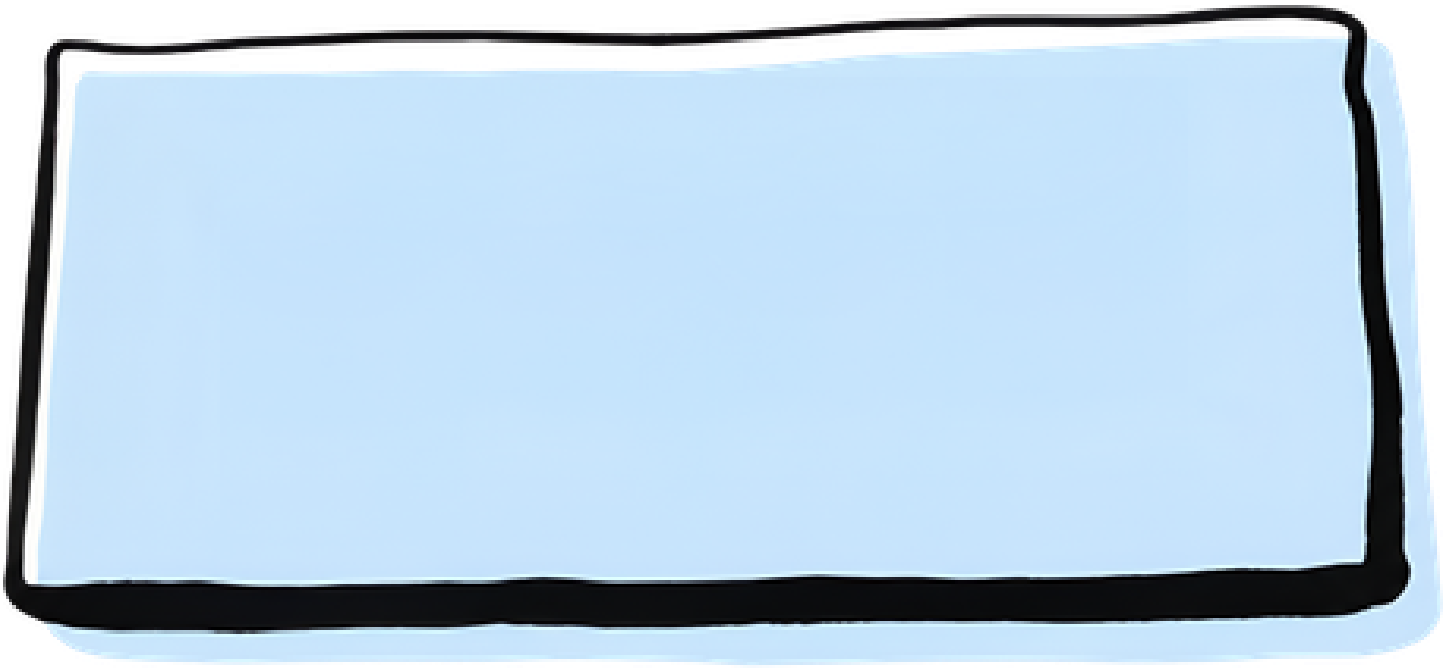
Where does it move too quickly?

3. THE STAKES

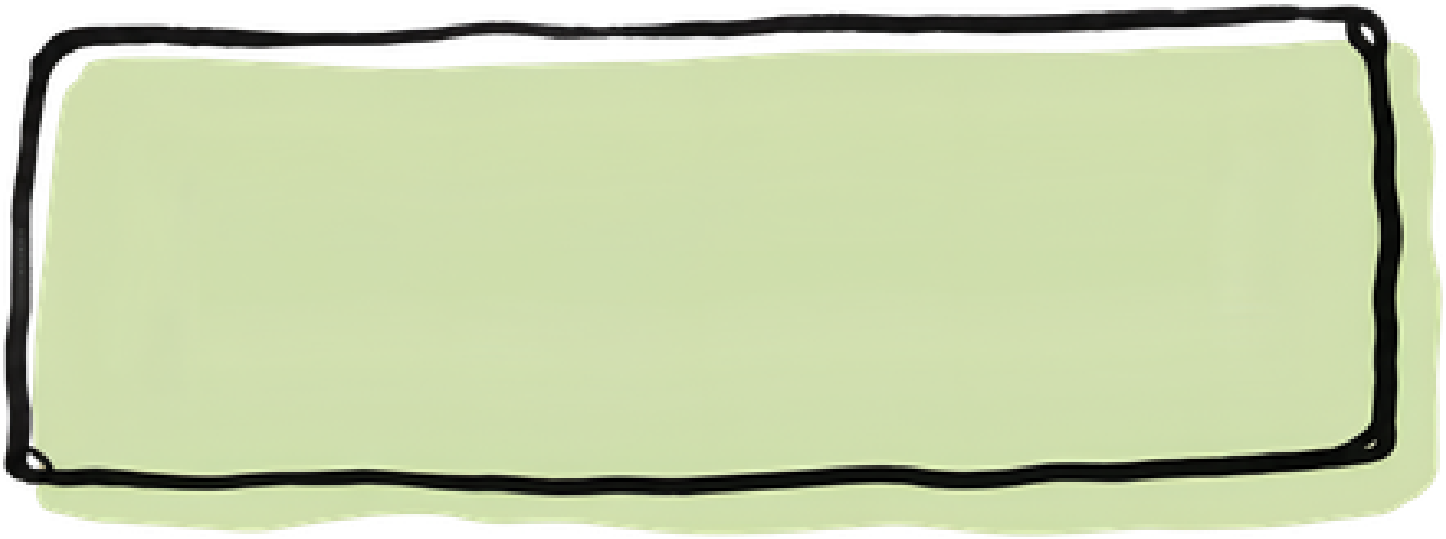
What does the protagonist want?



What happens if they don't get it?



What gets worse as the story progresses?



Do the stakes feel bigger by the end than they did at the beginning?

□ Yes

□ Somewhat

□ No

PASS TWO

THE CHARACTERS

PROTAGONIST

What do they want?

What do they actually need?

What are they afraid of?

What belief about themselves or the world needs to change?

What choice proves that they've changed?

THE SUPPORTING CAST

For every major character:

Character

What do they want?

What do they add?

Do they change?

CUT TEST

If you removed this character tomorrow:

What would break?

If the answer is nothing, ask whether they need to be there.

PASS THREE

THE CHAPTERS

Go chapter by chapter.

Chapter _____

What is this chapter doing?

What does the POV character want?

What gets in their way?

What changes by the end?

What makes the reader want to continue?

DECISION

□ KEEP — working as it is

□ CUT — doesn't need to be here

□ REWRITE — the idea works, execution doesn't

□ MOVE — belongs somewhere else

What needs changing?

PASS FOUR

THE SCENES

For scenes that aren't working:

What does the character want when they enter the scene?

What stops them?

What changes?

What is different when they leave?

If nothing changes, ask:

Does this scene need to exist?

□ Yes

□ No

□ Maybe, but it needs a new purpose

PASS FIVE

THE DETAILS

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Now look for the things readers notice even when they can't explain why.

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CONTINUITY

□ Names are consistent

□ Ages are consistent

□ Physical descriptions are consistent

□ Timeline makes sense

□ Locations make sense

□ Injuries / objects / clothing are consistent

□ Character relationships make sense

□ Worldbuilding rules stay consistent

□ POV doesn't shift accidentally

□ No unresolved plot threads

Things I caught:

YOUR REVISION PLAN

Don't try to fix everything at once.

MUST FIX

The things that affect the actual story.

1.

2.

3.

4.

SHOULD FIX

The things that would make the book stronger.

NICE TO FIX

The things that can wait.

BEFORE YOU START THE NEXT DRAFT

The biggest problem in my manuscript is:

The change that will make the biggest difference is:

The one thing from Draft One I refuse to lose:

Draft Two starts with:

_____

REVISION RULE

Don't polish a scene that needs to be rewritten.

Don't rewrite a scene that needs to be cut.

And don't cut a scene until you know why it was there.