Plotting Surprises & Mysteries in Any Genre

Alone in A Room With Invisible People Podcast

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What do you know that your reader doesn't?

At the start of the story, everything.

But surprises and mysteries are built from misdirection — from allowing (or helping) your reader to assume things that are not true, to jump to incorrect conclusions, to look at the wrong pieces of evidence or the wrong suspects first, and to otherwise gently help your reader to follow the wrong paths so that you can break out the right path at the right time, and delight your reader with your cool surprise.

So the process is:

- Define your character's problem

- Build multiple solutions

- Make some solutions more obvious than others

- Alternate obvious and tricky wrong solutions

- Present all the pieces for the correct path through the story, but hide them with misdirection

How do I define the character's problem?

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What are all the character's possible solutions?

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What are all the character's possible solutions? (continued)

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How do I present the pieces of each possible wrong solution?

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How do I hide the pieces of the character's correct solution?

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