

GRAPHIC NOVELS: CRAFTING A SCRIPT

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I'm currently working on a new graphic novel series and thought it might be helpful to share a little about some of the process of how I'm writing it. The idea being to pass on some concepts for your own work and give a behind the scenes look on the project in the process.

I'm finding more and more—at least on this project—that I'm writing it in two varying ways. The first is the way common to many authors and one which I pointed out in the first PDF of this series. This is taking a more page by page, panel by panel approach. And while this works and has worked for all my graphic novels, right now I'm finding that sometimes when I have a particular scene that calls for it I'm writing just the dialogue and then crafting the panel and page breakdown after that.

Using an occasional note to indicate an action in the scene that needs to be conveyed at various times I just write the whole exchange out, going back and tweaking and then breaking it down to the proper page and panel layout format.

For me, the process allows for more focus on the conversation and helps me see it first, hitting the important things that need to be said or expressed. This might not be the best way to write comic and graphic novel work but, as I said, for some scenes it really works well for me and actually can stream line the writing process. Now instead of having to stop and think what is being shown in each panel and who is in it and so forth, I can just concentrate on what is said (as will the reader when they get read the work) and not loose my train of thought with the overall conversation.

Here is an example of what I'm talking about. This is part of the dialogue I wrote for a previous issue of *Heroes of the Light*, a graphic novel series I'm working on finishing up a little ways down the line.

MIKAL:
YOU SAID YOU SPOKE WITH NATASHA?

MIKAL:
WHERE IS SHE?

BYRON:
SHE TOLD ME SHE WAS LEAVING LUMA.

MIKAL:
WHERE WAS SHE GOING?

MIKAL:
DID SHE TELL YOU?

BYRON:

NO.

MIKAL:

WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE HER?

BRYON:

ABOUT AN HOUR AGO OUTSIDE MY PARENT'S HOME.

MIKAL:

THEN SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE BY NOW...

BYRON:

I-I DIDN'T KNOW YOU TWO WERE A COUPLE—

MIKAL:

WE'RE NOT A COUPLE.

MIKAL:

SHE'S JUST A FRIEND.

MIKAL:

ONE I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO TALK WITH AGAIN BEFORE SHE LEFT.

BYRON:

I'M SORRY TO HAVE CAUSED YOU ANY TROUBLE.

MIKAL:

YOU DIDN'T...AT LEAST NOT YET.

With the dialogue written what I'd do next is take what is spoken and begin to flesh out what I saw as I wrote it. Added to this could be some trimming of the dialogue or even retooling if the visuals work better for the panel than what is said. This then would form the basis of the panels and pages, which look like this:

PAGE ONE (5 Panels)

Panel 1. We are back in Mikal's private room which we saw a glimpse of last issue when Byron came to visit. Here we see the two of them seated across from each other at a table.

1. MIKAL:
YOU SAID YOU SPOKE WITH NATASHA?

Panel 2. Close up of Mikal.

2. MIKAL:
WHERE IS SHE?

Panel 3. In this panel we can see both Byron and Mikal. Byron is looking a bit hesitant to share this information, not sure exactly what he might have gotten into while Mikal is anxious to hear about Natasha's whereabouts.

3. BYRON:
SHE TOLD ME SHE WAS LEAVING LUMA.

4. MIKAL:
WHERE WAS SHE GOING?

5. MIKAL:
DID SHE TELL YOU?

6. BYRON:
NO.

7. MIKAL:
WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE HER?

Panel 4. A close up of Byron now again, not sure what or how best he should be relaying this information.

8. BYRON:
ABOUT AN HOUR AGO OUTSIDE MY PARENT'S HOME.

Panel 5. Mikal sits back in his chair, with mild exasperation.

9. MIKAL:
THEN SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE BY NOW...

PAGE TWO (5 Panels)

Panel 1. We are looking at Bryon now from over Mikal's shoulder. He appears a little bit saddened by this thought of them being a couple as he really liked Natasha himself.

1. BYRON:

I-I DIDN'T KNOW YOU TWO WERE A COUPLE—

Panel 2. Shifted POV to the opposite of what we have in panel one as Mikal lets it be known in a nice but slightly curt way the truth of the matter to Byron.

2. MIKAL:

WE'RE NOT A COUPLE.

Panel 3. Pulled further back again in this panel so that we can see both of them. Mikal is looking off to the side of the room now as Byron is visibly breathing a sigh of relief.

3. MIKAL:

SHE'S JUST A FRIEND.

4. MIKAL:

ONE I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO TALK WITH AGAIN BEFORE SHE LEFT.

Panel 4. Similar set up as in the last panel save Byron is looking a bit remorseful now as Mikal has focused again on the conversation.

5. BYRON:

I'M SORRY TO HAVE CAUSED YOU ANY TROUBLE.

6. MIKAL:

YOU DIDN'T...AT LEAST NOT YET.

Panel 5. Mikal and Byron just stare at each other in this panel.

So there you have it. Like I said, the process works with me for certain scenes. Feel free to give it a try yourself and see what might develop. It could be a great way to break some writer's block that might creep your way or even get some new life to a scene or direction of a story you've been developing that has hit a bit of snag.

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