

Insurgency

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You see, the thing about writing a novel is that if you really create living characters, characters with their own motivations and histories and baggage and aspirations as well as perspiration, they don't tend to neatly follow the directions you've laid out for them. In fact, you can't really know where the book is going to go until you have some understanding of the forces at play, not if you want the story to ring true. And while some of those forces are situational, the initial conditions and setting and precipitating incidents and all, many of them are relational and transactional, which means character-driven. Rising action really means rising emotions and emotions are messy.

This can quickly lead to anarchy. And anarchy is not a wonderful thing, given that your aim - the whole reason for embarking upon this flight of fancy in the first place - was to tell a simple little story that you thought would interest readers, make an insightful point regarding the human condition even and which you have therefore, you know, planned out.

But no-o-o-o, the crowd that inhabits the novel decides they want to have their own say in things. So Maggie, who was originally going to be a bit player in the piece and whose sole job was to provide a love interest for Marc so as to take that bit of tension off the relationship between Marc and Julia, decides she needs a life of her own and even (crap!) a third dimension and needs, for Gawd's sake. And a daughter. Don't get me started on the damned daughter!

And the townspeople refuse to fit into the neat Mayberry-esque framing I had planned for them and start lobbying for more page time, both individually and collectively and the next thing you know, there's a couple dozen where I'd figured on maybe six and new neighbors showing up every writing day.

Then there's Max. All Max had to do was die. His demise takes place in the prologue so that one might reasonably have thought that he would play his scene, thereby providing motivation for the other characters to come together (no, not like Big Chill except really precisely like Big Chill, but not really) and then to be content in his croakitudinous condition and Just. Stay. Dead. You think he could handle that? One might think that being deceased, he could have just, you know, stayed quiet. One might think that and one would be wrong again! Which brings us to Georgia but I'm not going to sound off on Georgia because I really like her, even if she wasn't one of the original characters and sort of wheedled her way in on the figurative coattails of the dead guy who refused to stay dead.

These people are making me crazy!

Which I must have been for ever thinking I could write this thing.

Which I can. I will. I am.

But I don't have to like it.

Except the dogs. The dogs be cool. (They have very little dialogue.)