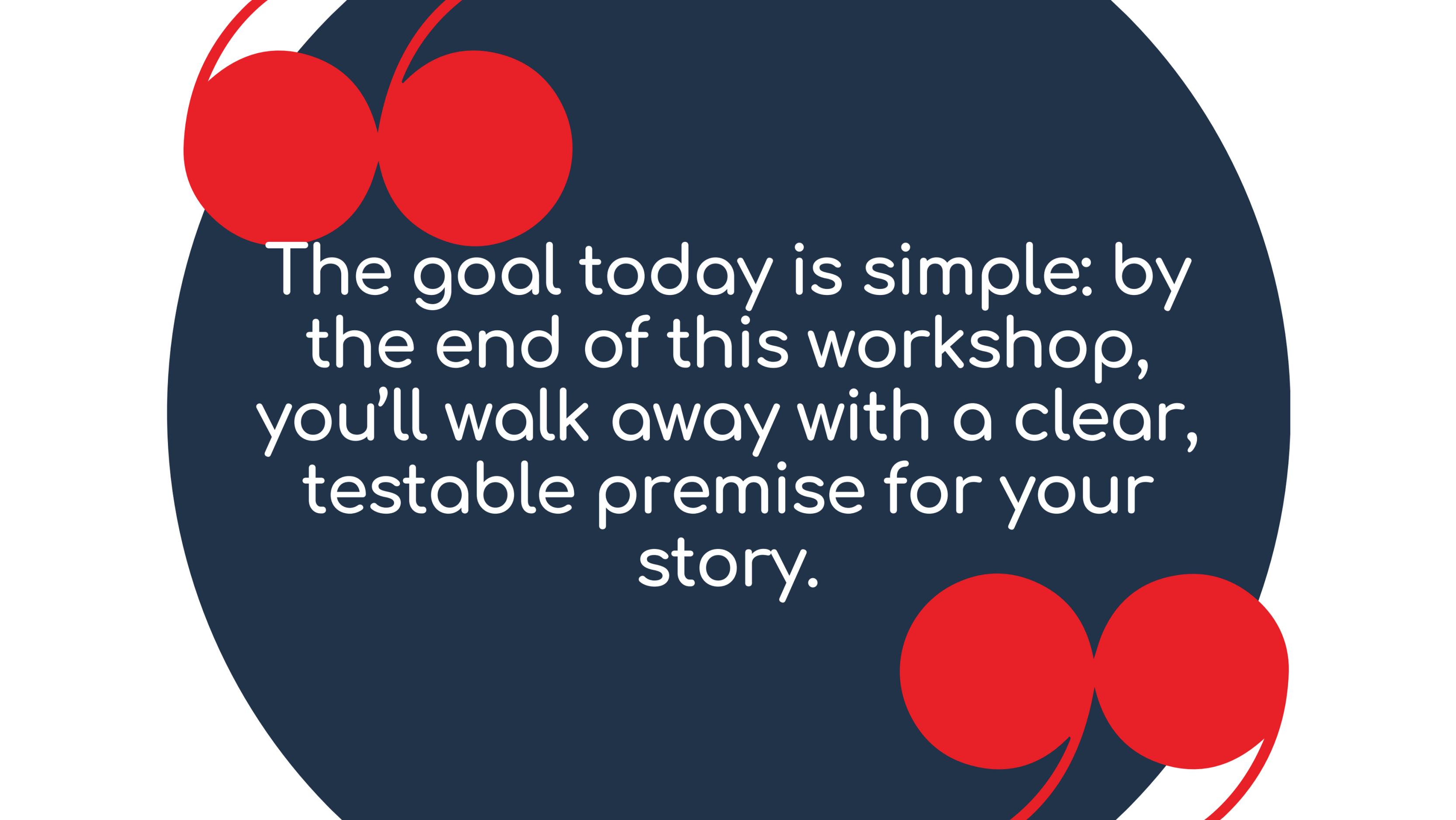


**JERICHO
WRITERS**
WITH YOU
FOR EVERY
WORD

From Spark to Story

With Becca Day



The goal today is simple: by the end of this workshop, you'll walk away with a clear, testable premise for your story.

Every story starts with a spark

1 A question that intrigues you

2 A character or setting

3 An image that sticks in your mind

4 A plot point

5 A specific chapter (often the opening or climax)

6 Something else?



Write your spark in the
chat



Why a spark isn't enough

If we dive straight into writing without testing the idea's strength, we often hit roadblocks.



For example...

I had this idea a couple of years ago:

A woman wakes up in a bunker with a man she doesn't know. He tells her she can't leave because there's some kind of poison in the air and it will kill her. She has to figure out if he's telling the truth or not.



For example...

On the face of it, this is a good idea for a psychological thriller. It has lots of room for tension, doubting herself and the man, emotion, played into the isolation trope etc.

HOWEVER

There were a few issues that stopped me from writing this book.



For example...

1. There would only be one setting
2. There would only be one other character
3. I would probably have needed to include flashbacks of her life before to flesh it out, and I suspected it would have ended up becoming more literary than commercial, with slower pacing than my readers expect from me.





How to test your spark's viability

Ask yourself...

Does my spark naturally raise conflict and stakes?

Does my spark lead to a clear central question the reader will want answered?

Can it generate enough obstacles, twists, or complications to fill an entire novel?

Is there room for my characters to grow, change, or be tested in meaningful ways?

Does it excite me enough that I'll still want to write about it months from now?

Does it naturally raise conflict & stakes?

- Write your spark at the top of a page and list at least 5 things that could go wrong because of it.
- Identify what two opposing forces your spark brings into play (e.g., order vs. chaos, loyalty vs. betrayal). If you can name them, conflict is built in.
- Write your spark as a sentence, then add “but” or “until” to force conflict (e.g., A mistreated boy lives under the stairs... until a giant tells him he’s a wizard).



Does it lead to a central question

- Phrase your spark as a question (What if...? or How will...?). Does it make you want to know the answer?
- Try to explain your spark to a friend in one sentence. If they immediately ask, “And then what happens?”, you’ve got a strong story question.
- Identify at least one piece of information the reader won’t know until much later in the story.



Can it generate enough obstacles?

- Spend 10 minutes brainstorming every possible obstacle, big or small, realistic or bizarre. You won't use all of them.
- Ask: "What's the worst thing that could happen to my character?" Apply that to your spark.
- Ask: "What would typically happen in my genre? How can I bend or subvert that expectation?"



Is there room for my characters to grow?

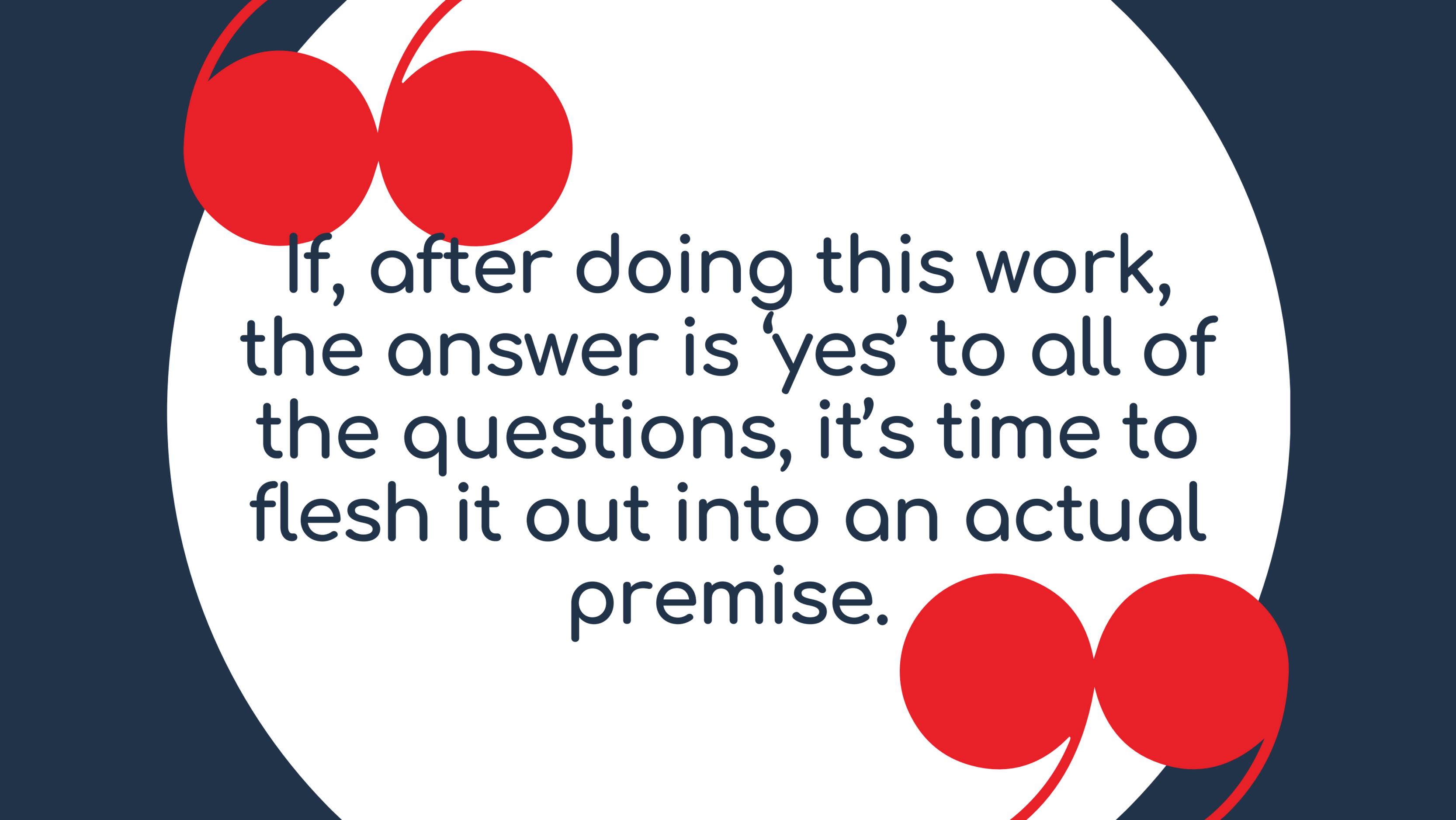
- Jot down who your character is at the start and who they might be at the end. Look for a clear contrast.
- Imagine your setting before the spark and after it. What big changes happen?
- Write a quick paragraph about what deeper human truth or theme your spark might explore (grief, hope, betrayal, resilience etc). Transformation is usually tied to theme.



Does it excite me enough?

- Create a quick Pinterest board or image collage for your spark. If you get carried away pinning or imagining scenes, that's a great sign of lasting energy.
- Draft a “flash scene” from your spark without worrying about where it fits or if you'll use it. If you're eager to write more, your excitement is sustainable.
- Put the idea away for a bit. If you're still thinking about it in a week's time, it's probably a good one.





If, after doing this work,
the answer is 'yes' to all of
the questions, it's time to
flesh it out into an actual
premise.

Crafting your premise

Step 1. Gather your materials

- Your spark (the initial idea or image)
- Your conflict & stakes (try to summarise this in 1 sentence)
- Your central question
- Your brain dump of plot points



Crafting your premise

Step 2. Complete this formula

A [protagonist] must [goal], but [obstacle],
otherwise [stakes].

Crafting your premise

Step 2. Complete this formula

A young wife must keep her secret hidden from her new husband, but her mother-in-law knows it. She must stop her from telling, otherwise her marriage will end.

Crafting your premise

Step 3. Expand

- Sentence 1: Introduce the protagonist and spark
- Sentence 2: Outline the central conflict / obstacle
- Sentence 3: Highlight the stakes or transformation

Crafting your premise

Step 3. Expand

- Sentence 1: Newly-wed Mellie moves into her mother-in-law Pauline's crumbling manor house to help care for her after she had a stroke which left her bed-bound and unable to speak.
- Sentence 2: When she discovers that Pauline knows her darkest secret, she must do everything in her power to ensure that Pauline never learns to speak again.
- Sentence 3: If she does, she'll tell Mellie's secret, which will end her marriage. Can Mellie keep both her secret and her morals?





Once you've written your 3 sentence
premise, share it in Townhouse and
see what people think!



Questions?

