

## Module Three

### Handout: 3-Act Story Structure

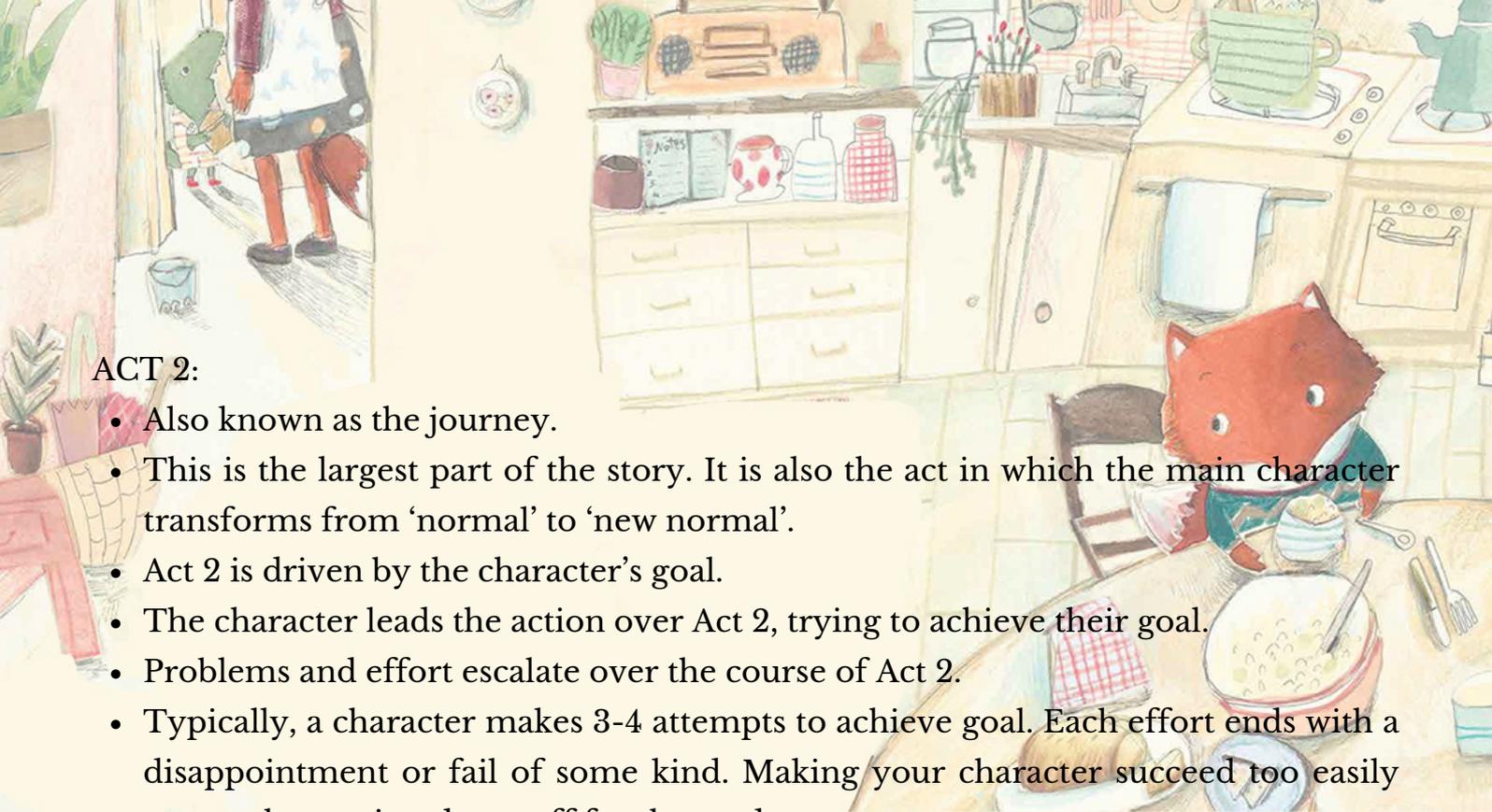
Please refer to the previous handout for the 3-act diagram.

Below are some key points to remember. Watch the video for more.

#### ACT 1:

- Also called the step-up or intro. It is the character's 'normal'.
- Keep it short; one or two spreads.
- The purpose of Act 1 is to introduce the character and relevant characteristics and story points. For example, Billy is scared of the dark. But we only mention this if the story is about this key characteristic in some way.
- The reader's experience in Act 1 is sympathy and empathy for the main character.
- At the end of Act 1, there is a disruption of some kind. Something that catapults the character into action. The character forms a goal.





## ACT 2:

- Also known as the journey.
- This is the largest part of the story. It is also the act in which the main character transforms from 'normal' to 'new normal'.
- Act 2 is driven by the character's goal.
- The character leads the action over Act 2, trying to achieve their goal.
- Problems and effort escalate over the course of Act 2.
- Typically, a character makes 3-4 attempts to achieve goal. Each effort ends with a disappointment or fail of some kind. Making your character succeed too easily means the tension drops off for the reader.
- Act 2 ends with the character thinking that they will never achieve their goal. This is the interlude. During this interlude - also known as 'the blue page' or 'the darkest hour before the dawn', the character has a realisation that they do know the solution to their problem. The character digs deep and becomes the hero of their story.
- The key emotion for the reader during Act 2 is concern and worry for the character.

## ACT 3:

- Also known as entering the 'new normal'.
- This section is relatively small.
- In Act 3, we see the climax, which is basically the solution to the problem. It's where it all wraps together. The character is the hero.
- In Act 3, we have the falling action, which is where the threads are tied. You don't have to tie everything off neatly, mind you!
- You might end with a rest page, a punch-line, or maybe a one-line sentiment that circles back to the beginning of the story.
- The key emotion for the reader is catharsis.

