**How To: Scary Stories**

1. Make a list of your greatest fears.

-Fear of the unknown is always a good one, because people fear what they don’t know.

-What scares you? If you tap into that, it will come across to the readers.

2. Add a what if to your greatest fear.

-“What if I was stuck in an elevator with a dead person?”

-“What if the elevator was a portal to hell?”

3. Work your fear into the setting of the story.

-Use the setting to limit or trap your characters in the story.

-i.e. stick them into an elevator and trap them or lock them into their fear.

4. Try taking an ordinary situation and adding something horrifying.

-For example, you come across a severed ear on a walk.

5. Look for a story in the news and base your story off it, or use writing prompts for ideas.

-Taking from what you know is always a good place to start.

6. Developing characters

-They must be relatable to the reader and the reader should empathize with them or else the story won’t have the same effect.

-You will also need a villain.

-You will also need supporting and minor characters.

7. You need to make up specific details for each character.

-name, age description

-personality traits

-likes/dislikes

-family history

-best friend/enemy/etc.

8. Make the stakes for your main character clear and extreme.

-The reader needs to know what your protagonist will have to lose if they are unsuccessful.

-The reader needs to know what the consequences of certain/decisions and choices will be.

-create extreme emotions such as fear, etc.

-the stakes and consequences drive the story forward and they build tension and suspense.

9. Make your villain not quite right.

-ie. Not normal. Give them something that makes them off kilter or off in general.

10. Make life difficult for the characters.

-Horror is about fear and tragedy and whether your character can overcome their fears.

-Bad things happening to good people is tense.

11. Allow characters to make bad decisions

-Have them make bad decisions while convinced they are making the right one and while thinking they are moving against the threat.

-But don’t go overboard.

12. Create a plot outline.

-exposition: set scene/introduce characters

-inciting incident: something happens to start the story

-rising action: continue story, build excitement and suspense

-climax: moment of greatest tension

-falling action: events after climax

-resolution: solves main problem

-denouement: ending in which characters resolve remaining questions.

13. Show don’t tell

-Help the reader step into the characters shoes by using descriptions.

-Tell: She had brown hair.

-Show: Her hair was like melted chocolate, spilling over her shoulders.

14. Drop hints towards the climax.

-Hints and foreshadowing are things that are more discovered in a second read through, but when the reader goes back for a second read they’ll be delighted to find the clues leading up to the ending.

-They also help the reader try and guess what is going to happen.

15. Avoid obvious words and clichés:

-scared, scary, terrified, terrifying, horrified, horror, afraid, frightened

-“Run!” or “Don’t look behind you!”

16. You can use gore and violence in your story, but too much of it will be desensitizing to your reader.

-If the same thing is happening over and over, readers will grow bored.

-Put it in a spot where the gore will be effective.

17. Build up to a climax.

-Give your characters more than they can handle.

-Pile on minor battles, small losses and small wins.

18. Moment of realization:

-Allow the character to solve the problem after a build of details in the story.

19. Write the climax:

-a danger or threat to character’s physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual well being. -This is the point of most intense interest to the reader

20. Ending twists:

-add something the reader won’t expect

21. Ending:

-time to wrap up loose ends.

-However, stories often don’t wrap up all the loose ends because that’s scarier.

-It leaves the reader wondering.

22. Make sure to edit and review for grammar, etc.

-also look for suspense and plot.

-ask people

-Is it believable? Is it realistic? Is the continuity okay? Does it have a logical order? How is the pace? Is it interesting? Does the story make sense?

-However, make the changes you think are appropriate. It is your story, so keep that in mind.