

# Plot Blueprint: MONTHLY MEMO September

**To: You**

**From: Plot Blueprint**

**Date: Sept 1**

**RE: Monthly Memo**

Hi, everyone! Here is a memo with some ideas and links. If you have something you'd like me to address, let me know: [Plotblueprint@gmail.com](mailto:Plotblueprint@gmail.com)

So everyone happily plotting away? Remember, you can schedule a coaching call at when you finish a module, and we can talk about whatever concerns or questions you have. I've been doing these in Zoom, which creates a recording and a transcript (not perfect, but not bad), so you'll have a record of everything we said.

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Is anyone reworking an older story? I call that "re-invention". Let's talk about that!

## **Reinventing Your Story: Part 1: Why reinvent?**

Why reinvent a completed story?

It used to be that you had one chance to sell a book to any given publisher, agent, or customer. If the book you wrote wasn't the book they wanted, well, you took the battered manuscript out of the SASE envelope, sighed, and went back to Writer's Market to find another possible market. (Anyone else remember those days?)

Once in a great while, an editor would send a "revise and resubmit" letter, and you might get another chance... but usually that wouldn't work out as a sale either. Publishers often had pretty strict guidelines for genre books, and no matter what they said about wanting "fresh voices," they really wanted "more of the same, only better." Or they wanted something quite specific, or what they wanted one year they didn't want the next, and if you didn't hit the bull's-eye on just the right day, you were probably out of luck. (I speak from long experience of just barely missing many sales....)

But things are different now. The market has changed so rapidly, we're all scrambling to catch up. And the publishing industry, always so slow to learn from their mistakes, is at least becoming a bit more wary of wholesale and arbitrary rejection. No one wants to be like one of the nine supposedly smart editors who rejected the first Harry Potter book. They are starting -- some of them-- to look beyond and consider what might sell in the long run-- a wonderful series idea, a great imagined world, a compelling voice. An author with one or more of those might be worth talking to, even if the offered book isn't quite right.

Agents too are realizing that the easy sales they had gotten accustomed to aren't so easy anymore, and that their captive clients are feeling more liberated and expecting something more than just another sale to the

same old place and the same old contract. Agents have always talked about longterm partnerships with their clients, and some even meant it-- but now that's getting to be a necessity. Authors have other options now, and agents are having to think of ways to make themselves useful, including helping to manage an independent publishing career. In this case, they also will need to consider more intangible aspects of an author's craft, including the ability to self-promote and use social media. Again, the book might not be "just right," but the author might be.

Finally, even those authors who have decided to forego the traditional route and don't have to hit the mark with publishers and agents still might have to face the most discerning of all critics, the reading public. Readers now are much more likely to choose an AUTHOR rather than a single book. (If they like the book, they want more from the author.) But readers can be capricious, turning away from a book because of a single word in the description, or because the book seems too dark or not dark enough or too derivative or too innovative, or... That's one reason they can be so loyal to authors they like, and why they are often willing to take another chance if the "problem" has been fixed.

Problem is -- authors have to find the readers/publishers/agents who will want these books... and sometimes that will require making major changes in a book with an agenda of getting that longterm relationship.

So the good news is: We're getting more second chances!

The bad news is: We have to take advantage of those second chances!

So let's talk about ways to take an existing book and reinvent it to take that second chance. Of course, I have a few tips!

## 2: Types of Reinventing

Let's talk a bit about types of reinvention.

There are three big categories, and we can deal with each if you have questions:

**1. Reinvent the book.** This happens when something has changed and the book that seemed just great no longer works. For example, one of my books was written as a women's fiction, but it sold as a mystery to a mystery imprint. Big surprise! The mystery plot was pretty lame. Why? Because I wrote the main plot to be the heroine's life journey to recover from a divorce. Sure, she had to solve her ex's murder along the way, but the big triumphant climax was her getting over her fear of disappointing or losing her son. Cough. I had to beef up the whole mystery thing, put in clues, motivation, suspects, all that stuff mystery novels usually have.

A friend of mine right now is trying to turn an old manuscript aimed at Harlequin (that is, a "category romance") into a "single-title" romance, which means, at minimum, adding in a subplot or two and deepening the interaction with other characters.

Another friend wrote a young adult novel in third person and the publisher likes it... but wants it in first person.

There are, these days, many reasons we might want to perform major surgery on what is a pretty good book (and complete too).

**2. Reinvent the author.** We used to just have to change our penname, you know, to let go of the baggage associated with our author name! But now, everyone knows that Jane Romance is really Bill Suspense, so it takes more than a name change.

Why would you need to reinvent yourself as an author? First would be after a long series of rejections if you're unpublished. But even published authors might need to start over after a long dry spell, or when the market for their type of book has dropped out, or if they've somehow screwed something up so that readers have started a boycott, or they were caught up in a scandal, or had some serious health issue that derailed them, and "Amy Author" is no longer a good person to be in the intense new publishing world.

**3. Reinvent the career.** In some ways, this is the adventure of the new millennium. We're all reinventing our careers, whether we want to or not. All the old verities are discarded, and what used to work to make for a great career might not anymore. And all the street savvy you might have picked up along the way might not do much to help you avoid all the new pitfalls.

Reinventing a career might involve discarding an agent or the entire "legacy publishing industry." It might be about changing genres or learning how to navigate social media or how to do your own negotiations. It might mean going from being just an author to being a business. It might mean finding and fixing a brand.

It will very likely mean conceiving of stories as connected to create a series or "cluster" of related books under a single umbrella title like **The Academy of Alien Teens**. (I just made that up. ☺)

For the moment, what would you say is your current situation? Anyone need/want to reinvent? Are there other categories?

Next month, we'll talk about a couple aspects of reinventing a story now that we have so much more versatility with publishing.

Written Word Media passes on some helpful information:

*Our first post this month is our guide to [writing an eBook description that sells](#). We write book descriptions every day for our newsletters, and we're excited to share what we've learned. [Read the Article](#)*

*Our second post is all about staying healthy and productive as a writer. Writing can be surprisingly tough on your body and mind, so we've put together some of our favorite [at-desk exercises and meditation techniques](#).*

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## Chapter Endings

I recently listened to a good mini-class by Adriana Anders, who writes “serially” for Radish Fiction, posting a scene or a chapter each week. She talked about a few ways writing serially can help teach you more about chapter endings. Her suggestions:

### Internal story

- Create doubt-
- Show an internal debate
- End on self-doubt or questioning

### External- Learn something new

- Ask a new question
- Move the character to a new setting
- New adventure

### Interactional-

- Create a glimmer of mistrust
- Throw in a new character
- Start an argument
- Create a suspicion about the other

**Check out her explanation:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2qx1Bid5HA>

I think serial fiction (which Dickens used to do!) is going to be big in the future, like episodic TV. What do you think?

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**Remember to schedule a coaching call whenever you're done with a module of the Plot Blueprint Course.**

**If you like, we can do it on Zoom so you can have a recording of our discussion.**

**Have fun plotting! Feel free to share this memo with your writing friends.**

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