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I'm **Liane Little** of **Novelplay**, an author and screenwriter based in Alberta, Canada. I've done a fair number of tutorials here on **Novelplay**, but so far, I haven't been able to feature a modern author's work. I have to say, I'm really excited to get started.

The novel I'm going to be working on is **Never-DEAD** by *Ann Greyson*. There is so much to be said about this novel and it's hard to sum up this entire book in a few paragraphs. So I'm going to let the blurb she was kind enough to provide me speak for itself:

With December 21, 2012, approaching, the end of the Maya calendar, a world-changing virus that turns people into mindless zombies springs up in Chiapas, Mexico and starts to spread across the world. Luckily, 26-year-old Hannah Winter works as the head of information technology at Biogenetics & Disease Control, a medical research company, deep beneath the city of Dulce, New Mexico, and focal point for an antidote to the virus. Not so lucky is her nineteen-year-old sister Jenna, who is far away in San Antonio, Texas and must make a perilous journey navigating around flesh eating zombies traveling to New Mexico to reunite with her sister Hannah.

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Let's get started with the tutorial focusing solely on Chapter 1.

This is the legend we'll be working from.

Instructions: Arial

Screenplay: Courier New

Excerpt: Times New Roman

Paragraph One

Because this is the start of the screenplay, I'm going to add the customary transition followed by a scene heading.

The scene heading is going to indicate that the scene happens on the airplane. Because the element is so short, I'm going to add the airport details into the action element.

Following the scene heading, I'm going to add an action element to cover the rest of the information. While I add the action, I'm going to check the tense of the text. It needs to be in present tense. There's no need to check for point of view as it's already in the third person.

One thing to remember is that a single action element paragraph should be limited to five lines. If you need to include more information than that, you can always add another paragraph.

Given that, I'm also going to rewrite this paragraph to become more concise which will limit the length of the screenplay as a whole. It's also going to include the proper character introductions.

FADE IN:

INT. COASTAL AIRWAYS FLIGHT 238 - DAY

HENRY WINTER (40, sandy hair, green eyes) is sitting in a business class aisle seat. He's browsing his smartphone as COASTAL AIRWAYS FLIGHT 238 boards at eight a.m. on a sunny morning at the Tucson International Airport.

The plane is mid-sized with eight single window seats along each side separated by sets of two seats in the middle.

COASTAL AIRWAYS FLIGHT 238 was boarding at the Tucson International Airport on a sunlit morning in Arizona. At 8 a.m., Henry Winter sat in an aisle seat in business class, browsing his HTC smartphone. The middle-aged man had sandy hair, green eyes, and was wearing khakis, a blue polo shirt, and dress shoes. There were eight single seats by the window on the left and right sides, and one row of six, two-by-two seats in the middle, separated by two wide aisles.

Paragraph Two

This paragraph is quite a bit shorter and doesn't quite need so much work. Mostly just a check for tense, although I'm going to give him a character introduction of MAN, as he doesn't have a name yet.

I'm also not going to include that he's actually feeling groggy. It's enough to say that he looks it. This is because screenplays are more external. They're what we see, whereas novels are very internal and can include thoughts as well as physical and emotional feelings.

A MAN (30) with dark hair and eyes boards. He's looking classy in a suit and tie, but he appears groggy and sports a bandage on his hand.

A thirtyish man with dark hair and eyes, wearing a well-tailored gray suit, black tie, and a bandage around his hand, stepped onto the plane. He was looking and feeling groggy.

Paragraph Three

This paragraph, though short, includes two elements: the character element and the dialogue element. The easy way to work with dialogue is to just reuse the same text but remove the quotation marks. It's a huge time saver. Alternatively, you can copy and paste the dialogue out of the quotation marks as well. I'm going to add a note in the previous action element that Jacqueline is included in this scene, as well.

A MAN (30) with dark hair and eyes boards. He's looking classy in a suit and tie. He appears groggy as he

approaches the flight attendant, JACQUELINE, and he sports a bandage on his hand.

JACQUELINE
Welcome to Coastal Airways. My
name is Jacqueline. Enjoy the
flight.

“Welcome to Coastal Airways. My name is Jacqueline. Enjoy the flight,” the flight attendant said to him.

Paragraph Four

This action element is only going to include a quick rewrite for tense and flow. I'm going to go back up to the previous action element and note her physical appearance there.

A MAN (30) with dark hair and eyes boards. He's looking classy in a suit and tie. He appears groggy as he approaches the flight attendant, JACQUELINE (tall, Hispanic), and he sports a bandage on his hand.

JACQUELINE
Welcome to Coastal Airways. My
name is Jacqueline. Enjoy the
flight.

He barely smiles as he walks past her to his seat.

She was a tall, Hispanic woman. He barely smiled as he walked past her toward his seat.

Paragraph Five

Again, this is a nice and tidy set of characters and dialogue elements. Remember not to include the quotation marks.

Now that he's been given a name, I can go back up and edit that in the action element two previous.

GRIFFIN (30) with dark hair and eyes boards. He's looking classy in a suit and tie. He appears groggy as he approaches the flight attendant, JACQUELINE (tall, Hispanic), and he sports a bandage on his hand.

JACQUELINE
Welcome to Coastal Airways. My
name is Jacqueline. Enjoy the
flight.

Paragraph Four

We always need to know who is speaking the dialogue. I'm going to add the character element then the dialogue element.

HENRY WINTER

Not at all. I didn't notice.

"Not at all. I didn't notice."

Paragraph Five

This one is a straight up action element. I'm going to edit for tense as well as making it less internal and more visual.

Griffin shows off his injured hand and Winter takes a sidelong look. Winter's clearly disinterested and looking like he wants to sit somewhere else.

Winter stole a sidelong look at him as he lifted his wrapped hand. He wasn't thinking about what Griffin had just said to him. He was wondering instead if he could sit somewhere else.

Paragraph Six

This paragraph has a few different elements. I'm going to create an action element before adding the character and dialogue elements.

Griffin's sweating. He loosens his tie and opens the top two buttons of his shirt.

GRIFFIN

Well, it's the strangest thing. Just before daylight this morning, I was waiting in my hotel's driveway. Less than a minute later a taxi. Less than a minute later, a taxi pulled up alongside me. As I reached out to open the door, a woman came up, grabbed my hand and bit it hard.

Sweating profusely, Griffin loosened his tie, opened the top two buttons of his shirt, and said, "Well, it's the strangest thing. Just before daylight this morning, I was waiting in my hotel's driveway. Less than a minute later, a taxi pulled up alongside me. As I reached out to open the door, a woman came up, grabbed my hand and bit it hard."

Paragraph Seven

The next paragraph also contains action, character, and dialogue elements.

Winter suddenly takes interest and puts away his phone.

HENRY WINTER

Yes. That is strange.

Taking interest in what he was saying, Winter put away his phone and said, "Yes, that is strange."

Paragraph Eight

Now for a regular character and dialogue set.

GRIFFIN

The woman who bit me looked like a vagrant. I pushed her away, opened the door of the cab, threw my suitcase inside and slid in behind it, then slammed the door shut. I told the driver to get a move on because I have a plane to catch. Which he did. Thank God.

"The woman who bit me looked like a vagrant. I pushed her away, opened the door of the cab, threw my suitcase inside and slid in behind it, then slammed the door shut. I told the driver to get a move on because I have a plane to catch. Which he did. Thank God."

Paragraph Nine

One thing to keep in mind is that the action here is also possible to do as parenthetical as it's so short. I prefer to use as few parentheticals as possible, though, so I'm going to do it as an action element followed by the character and dialogue elements.

Winter looks at Griffin's hand again.

HENRY WINTER

You should have that looked at.

Winter looked at his bandaged hand again and said, "You should have that looked at."

Paragraph Three

This paragraph is an action element. I'm going to re-write for tense and length. Because the viewer is to hear the music, I'm going to indicate the sound with capitalization.

Winter puts on his headset. We can hear EASY LISTENING MUSIC as he dials up the volume. Griffin scratches the bandage on his hand, irritated, before he closes his eyes and dozes off.

Winter put on a headset, dialed up easy listening music, and leaned back in his plush seat. Griffin scratched at the bandage on his hand, where he felt an ache like an irritation, then he closed his eyes and dozed off.

Paragraph Four

I'm going to start this one with another scene heading, with a note about the time jump, before adding the edited action element.

INT. COASTAL AIRWAYS FLIGHT 238 - DAY (LATER)

There's a PAUSE IN THE MUSIC where we can hear HEAVY BREATHING. Winter glances over at Griffin's body, which is leaning over to one side. Griffin is pale and sickly with sweat streaming down his face. Winter looks at the bandaged hand and sees that blood is leaking through.

Thirty minutes into the flight, Winter was waiting for another tune, when he heard the sound of heavy breathing. Griffin's body was leaning over to one side. He glanced over to Griffin, who was pale as a ghost, looking very sick now with beads of perspiration on his forehead streaming down his face. Winter looked at his bandaged hand and noticed that leaking through the gauze was blood.

Paragraph Five

Again, this is another action element. I'm just going to check for tense and re-write it for length.

Winter puts away the headset, unfastens his belt and stands abruptly. He walks down the aisle to Jacqueline, the nearest flight attendant, who's pulling a blanket out of the overhead compartment.

He put away the headset, unfastened his belt, and stood abruptly from his chair. Hurriedly, he walked down the aisle till he found the flight attendant putting a tan blanket in the overhead compartment. It was Jacqueline.

Paragraph Six

This one is what I sometimes call the trifecta. An action element with character and dialogue elements. I'm going to remember not to include the quotation marks in the dialogue.

Winter is out of breath as he passes a hand through his hair.

WINTER

Excuse me, Miss. I'm sitting next to a man who looks ill.

"Excuse me, Miss. I'm sitting next to a man who looks ill," he said, out of breath, as he passed a hand through his hair.

Paragraph Seven

This one could also include an action element; however, I'm going to save the action for a little later and only put in the character and dialogue elements for now.

JACQUELINE

Take me to him.

"Take me to him," she said as she closed the compartment.

Paragraph Eight

So, now I'm going to add a slightly heftier action element.

Jacqueline closes the compartment then follows Winter to his seat. She looks Griffin over with a troubled look and taps him on the shoulder.

Jacqueline followed him to his seat. She looked Griffin over. There was a troubled look on her face as she tapped him on the shoulder.

Paragraph Nine

This one is only slightly different in that I'm going to put the action AFTER the character and dialogue elements.

JACQUELINE

Sir, are you alright?

She gets no reaction.

"Sir are you all right?" she asked, getting no reaction.

Page Four

Paragraph One

You've heard me say it a lot. I try to avoid using parentheticals, but they come in handy sometimes, which is the case here. I'm going to add a set of character, parenthetical and dialogue elements. I'm not going to include the quotation marks in the dialogue.

JACQUELINE
(turns to Winter)
Did he mention anything to you?

"Did he mention anything to you?" she asked, turning to face Winter.

Paragraph Two

This one I'm going to add an action element before the character and dialogue elements.

Winter looks confused like he doesn't know what's happening.

WINTER
He told me he had been bit in the
hand by a vagrant woman.

"He told me he had been bit in the hand by a vagrant woman," he said, with a puzzled look spread over his face like he didn't know what was happening.

Paragraph Three

This happens quite frequently, and this is one cause of the long length adaptations can have. For this one line of dialogue, I need to script two: the character element and the dialogue element.

JACQUELINE
Let me take a look.

"Let me take a look."

Paragraph Four

This one is strictly an action element. I'm going to condense it and rewrite it for the proper tense (present).

She leans over Griffin, takes his hand, and inspects the bandage more closely. His eyes fly open. They're bloodshot. Deranged. She notices and pulls her hand away. Griffin tries to stand up, but he's stopped by his seat belt. He GROWLS and bites her shoulder viciously.

She leaned over him, took his hand and inspected the bandage more closely. Griffin's bloodshot eyes flew open wide, and he looked deranged. She noticed, pulled her hand away, and was going to say something. He was trying to stand up but couldn't do it because he was strapped in. Then he growled and bit her shoulder, his teeth tearing her flesh.

Paragraph Five

Again, this one contains only an action element. I'm going to check for present tense and edit to become a little more concise.

Jacqueline hesitates a second before pushing him off. She runs down the aisle toward the rear of the plane. Winter stands for a moment looking at Griffin, confused, before following her.

A moment's hesitation before she pushed him off. She ran down the aisle toward the rear of the plane. Winter stood there for a minute just looking at Griffin in a state of confusion. Then he followed after Jacqueline.

Paragraph Six

There are not many times where I support adding more into a screenplay, however, in relation to showing what's happening, it lacks a little bit of description. I'm going to add just a little bit.

Jacqueline picks up the phone and we can hear the FLIGHT ATTENDANT CHIME through it.

The flight attendant chime sounded in the cockpit.

Paragraphs Seven Through Ten

This one is a conversation between Jacqueline and Captain. I'm not going to separate out these paragraphs as they are all character and dialogue pairings. I am, though, going to note in the captain's character elements that we hear him through the phone by using the Voice Over indication, V.O.

JACQUELINE
Captain, we have a medical
emergency with one of our
passengers.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
Jacqueline, what's going on? Are
you okay?

JACQUELINE
No, sir. The passenger bit my
shoulder. He is a danger to
others.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)
Okay, Jacqueline. Stay where you
are until further notice.

"Captain, we have a medical emergency with one of our passengers."

The Captain's voice returned, "Jacqueline what's going on? Are you okay?"

"No, sir. The passenger bit my shoulder. He is a danger to others."

"Okay, Jacqueline. Stay where you are until further notice."

Paragraph Eleven

I'm going to get a little creative with this one as I need to create some dialogue that isn't included. I'm going to include the action element then follow it with a character and dialogue pair. After that, I'm going to add another quick action element. I'm going to indicate the writing on the phone in capital letters.

Winter is standing behind her by the bathrooms and overhears. He takes out his cellphone, dials and puts it to his ear. He waits a second then BLURTS OUT:

WINTER
Hannah? Hannah, there's a problem
with a passenger. There might be
an emergency landing and-

We hear a TONE. Winter looks at his phone. "NO SIGNAL" flashes across the screen.

Henry Winter was standing by the bathrooms. Knowing that things were bad, he grabbed his cell phone and dialed his daughter Hannah. He told her there was a problem with a

passenger, and that there might be an emergency landing. In the midst of the conversation, the signal was lost. He hung up.

Page Five

Paragraph One

This paragraph is strictly an action element. I'm going to edit for tense and conciseness and introduce the new character by capitalizing him.

We can see down the aisle to where Griffin rips off his seat belt and attacks a nearby passenger. The gangly blond-haired YOUNG MAN is struggling, but Griffin manages to bite him on the forearm. Blood slowly stains the guy's shirt.

Meanwhile, Griffin had ripped off his seat belt and was wrestling with a gangly, blond-haired, young man wearing a gray Puma T-shirt and jeans. He had attacked the passenger biting him on the forearm, causing blood to trickle onto his shirt sleeve.

Paragraph Two

This paragraph is technically three elements: character, dialogue and action. As the action element is so short, I'm actually going to save it and include it in the next paragraph's action element. So, here, I'm only going to add the character and dialogue elements.

YOUNG MAN
Get off me, you freak!

"Get off me, you freak," the young man said, struggling to break his grip.

Paragraph Three

This one is entirely action. It needs to be checked for tense and edited for length. Even though keeping action under five lines isn't a rock-hard rule, it's a good one to go by if you can. It makes it easier to read that way.

The young man struggles to break Griffin's grip as passenger stand to watch. Another flight attendant uselessly tries to break them up. The young man trips Griffin, knocking him to his knees but he stands back up as the young man starts running to the other side of the plane.

He elbowed Griffin in the ribs. Passengers got up from their seats to watch. A flight attendant was attempting to break them up, just as the young man wrapped a leg around

the back of Griffin's ankle and tripped him, knocking him off balance. Griffin landed hard on his knees, but it was useless, because he stood up again just as the young man started running to the other side of the plane.

Paragraph Four

This one is also an action element so I'm going to do the same thing: check to make sure it's in present tense. As always, it never hurts to rewrite for length, either.

Panic breaks loose! People leave their seats, scared, and run down the aisle toward Winter. Jacqueline sees the rushing crowd and starts banging on the cockpit door.

Then all panic broke loose. People, scared of being bitten, left their seats and were running down the aisle toward Henry Winter. Jacqueline saw the rushing crowd, hurried to the cockpit and banged on the door.

Paragraph Five

This is a character and dialogue set. Remember that when you copy and paste dialogue, you never include the quotation marks around it unless the character themselves is quoting something.

JACQUELINE
Captain, it's Jacqueline. Please
let me in! Hurry! It's an
emergency!

"Captain, it's Jacqueline. Please let me in! Hurry! It's an emergency!"

Paragraph Six

This paragraph is an easier action element. I'm mostly going to check for tense but I'm also going to introduce the copilot with capitalization.

The COPILOT opens the door and lets her in before slamming and locking it.

The copilot opened the door to let her in. The thickset black man slammed the door shut and locked it.

Paragraph Seven

This one is a bit trickier. Unless we want to add some dialogue, it's hard to convey a specific thought a character is having. Because it's a screenplay, we need to SHOW everything. It's a visual medium rather than a mental one.

In this case, I think it's a thought every one of us would have in that situation, but it doesn't move the story along. I'm simply going to leave it out. I'm also going to rework the last sentence to show rather than tell.

Winter opens the bathroom door and slips inside. His terrified face disappears as he closes the door just in time for the screaming to start.

How could this be happening? Winter thought as he opened the bathroom door and locked himself inside. The screaming scared the daylights out of him.

Page Six

Paragraph One

I'm going to begin with new scene heading because this occurs in cockpit, rather than the cabin, like the previous scenes.

After that, the rest is a standard action element. I'm only going to check that it's in present tense and condense the writing a little bit. There's no need to introduce either Jacqueline or the copilot as they've both been introduced before.

As the length is getting long for a single paragraph, I'm going to split it up into two rather than be forced to cut out too much.

INT. FLIGHT 238 COCKPIT - DAY (LATER)

The copilot is focused on flying while Jacqueline stands behind him. She suddenly started convulsing and gasping for breath. She collapses face down onto the carpet, shaking and whimpering.

The copilot turns at the sound of her hitting the floor. He leaps up and kneels next to her. He rolls her over onto her back carefully.

After an additional fifteen minutes, Jacqueline convulsed and gasped for breath and was losing her balance. She collapsed onto the carpet, shaking and whimpering, then fell unconscious. The copilot hadn't seen her drop, but he had heard the sound of her reaching the floor. Quickly, he left his seat, crouched beside her and was able to roll her over.

Paragraph Two

This one is also a typical action element. I'm going to check for tense. Even though time moves forward a couple of minutes, I'm not going to include a new

scene heading. The sound of Jacqueline snarling and the copilot yelling are indicated with capitalization.

The copilot begins examining Jacqueline as she's laying unresponsive with her eyes closed. Her eyes pop open. She SNARLS and bites his arm! He YELLS and pushes her back down before standing up.

A couple of more minutes passed, and Jacqueline was perspiring until her eyes opened suddenly. She snarled and bit the copilot's arm. Tense with fear, he pushed her down and stood up.

Paragraph Three

This paragraph is also an action element. The standard checks for tense and being concise will apply, as always. The only difference here is the captain. He's spoken before but we haven't seen him in the flesh. He's going to be introduced by capitalizing his name.

The CAPTAIN turns his head to see Jacqueline standing up. She lunges, grabs the Captain from behind and bites into his neck. The copilot tries to pull her off of him. The Captain struggles to keep control of the plane as it makes a wide turn. It begins the descent.

The Captain turned his head to see what was happening just as she raised from the floor, grabbed him from behind with both arms, and bit into his neck. The copilot tried to pull her off the Captain, who struggled to steer the plane into a descent, making a wide turn, as he tried to land from the east.

Paragraph Four

A new scene heading is going to be needed for this paragraph followed by an action element. Again, sounds are indicated by capitalization. This action element ended up being quite a bit longer than the source material, which is fine! Whenever the information is important to the story and helps the flow of the scene and the screenplay as a whole, keeping and even adding length is alright. When you cut length, your goal is to cut out the unnecessary.

INT. FLIGHT 238 BATHROOM - DAY

Winter is hunkered down, trying to keep himself stable though he's getting tossed around the bathroom by turbulence while passengers in the cabin are SCREAMING.

The plane drops a few feet, and the engines start ROARING so loud, they DROWN OUT THE PASSENGERS.

Winter sinks even lower. He claps his hands tightly over his ears and tears start streaming down his face.

Winter was being shoved around in the bathroom by the plane's turbulence. The plane dropped, and the rumble was so loud from the jet's engines that he couldn't hear the passengers' screams anymore. He clapped his hands firmly over his ears. And then he lost it. His face filled with tears, as he drifted off into grief.

Paragraph Five

This one is mostly a scene heading followed by a short action element. Because this is an outside view of the plane, I'm going to mark it as EXT. or external, rather than INT. or internal, as I've been doing thus far. I'm going to embellish it a little bit to add more detail to what viewers will eventually see.

EXT. GILA NATIONAL FOREST - DAY

Distressed Coastal Airways Flight 238 is flying over the lush Gila National Forest in Catron County, New Mexico. The engines smoke as the plane takes a nosedive and CRASHES spectacularly into the forest.

Ten minutes later, the plane lost control and went down, crashing in the Gila National Forest in Catron County, New Mexico.

This tutorial is complete! If you're an author yourself and you'd like me to write a tutorial based on your work, you can check out the Feature package and contact me through through the [Novelplay](#) website

Have an amazing day and remember to write to watch!